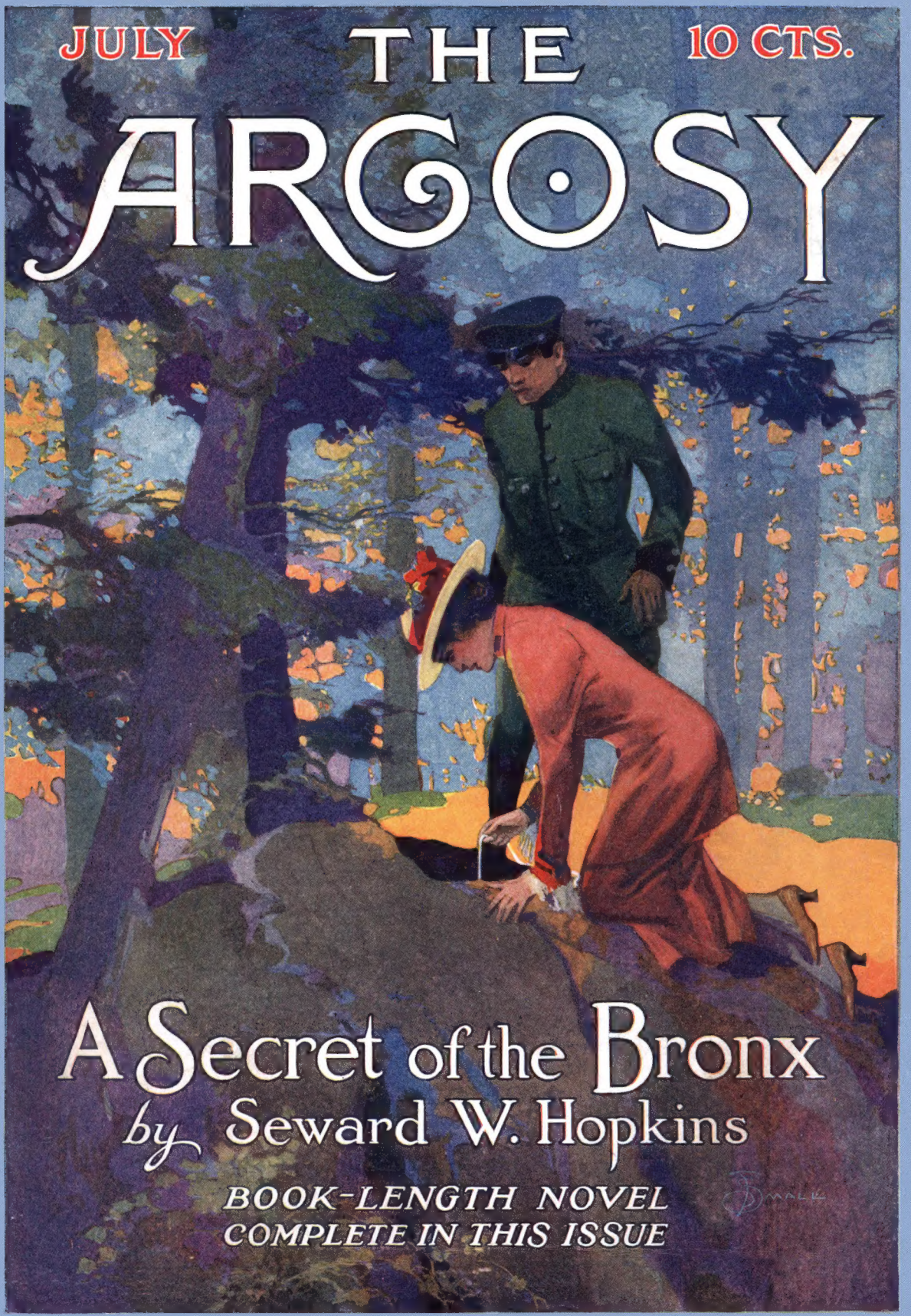
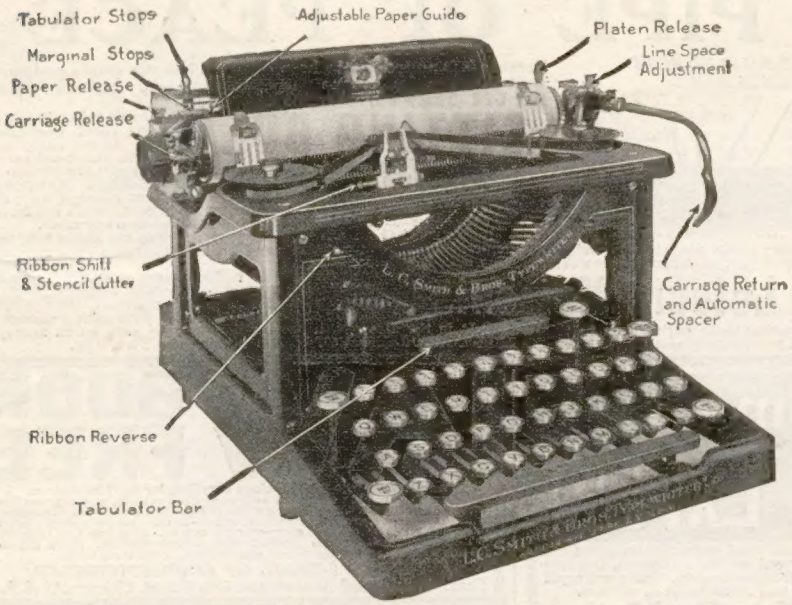

JULY
THE
10 CTS.
ARGOSY
A Secret of the Bronx
by Seward W. Hopkins
BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL
COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

Quality-Superb
The mildest tobacco for cigarettes is Turkish.
The best tobacco for cigarettes is Turkish.
Don't pay 10 Cents for anybody's cigarette until you've tried "Helmar," a fascinating, elevating, gentleman's smoke.
The Cigarette of the Present and the Future.
Stmargyros Makers of the Highest Grade Turkish and Egyptian Cigarettes in the World
HELMAR
TURKISH CIGARETTES
10¢
HELMAR
TURKISH CIGARETTES




I want, through this advertisement, to establish as friendly business relations with you as I possibly can. I want you to realize also, that it is my earnest effort and intention to give you full honest value for every dollar that you spend with me. This is the only way I can succeed. The publisher of this magazine will vouch for my square dealings during the four years and more my advertising has appeared.

I am building up my business on the foundation of good value and square dealings. I am saving thousands of satisfied customers thousands of dollars, by supplying, perfect—late style—visible writing—typewriters, at remarkably low prices.

All my transactions are handled throughout by personal correspondence. I assure you every courtesy and consideration, in your dealings with me. Your order will have my prompt, careful, personal attention. I will be glad to do business with you.

*Harry A Smith*

# TYPEWRITER SENSATION

## Free TRIAL—Use As You Pay

### Send me only $2.50 a month until the low total price of $48.80 is paid, and the machine is yours

**This is absolutely the most generous typewriter offer ever made. Do not rent a machine when you can pay $2.50 a month and own one. Think of it—Buying a $100.00 machine for $48.80. Cash price, $45.45. Never before has anything like this been attempted.**

## Standard Visible **L. C. Smith** Model Number 2

Perfect machines, Standard Size, Keyboard of Standard Universal arrangement writing 84 characters—universally used in teaching the touch system. **The entire line of writing completely visible at all times,** has the tabulator, the two color ribbon, with automatic reverse, the back spacer, ball bearing type bars, ball bearing carriage action, ball bearing shift action, in fact every late-style feature and modern operating convenience. Comes to you with everything complete, tools, cover, operating book and instructions, ribbon, practice paper—nothing extra to buy. **You cannot imagine the perfection of this beautiful reconstructed typewriter until you have seen it.** I have sold several thousand of these perfect latest style Model No. 2 machines at this bargain price, and every one of these thousands of satisfied customers had this beautiful, strictly up to date machine on five days' free trial before deciding to buy it. I will send it to you F. O. B. Chicago for five days' free trial. It will sell itself, but if you are not satisfied that this is the greatest typewriter you ever saw, you can return it at my expense. You won't want to return it after you try it—**you cannot equal this wonderful value anywhere.**

### You Take No Risk—Put In Your Order *Now*

When the typewriter arrives deposit with the express agent $8.80 and take the machine for five days' trial. If you are convinced that it is the best typewriter you ever saw, keep it and send me $2.50 a month until my bargain price of $48.80 is paid. If you don't want it, return it to the express agent, receive your $8.80 and return the machine to me. I will pay the return express charges. **This machine is guaranteed just as if you paid $100.00 for it.** It is standard. Over one hundred thousand people own and use these typewriters and think them the best ever manufactured.

**The supply at this price is very limited, the price will probably be raised when my next advertisement appears, so don't delay. Fill in the coupon today—mail to me—the typewriter will be shipped promptly.** There is no red tape. I employ no solicitors—no collectors—no chattel mortgage. It is simply understood that I retain title to the machine until the full $48.80 is paid. **You cannot lose. It is the greatest typewriter opportunity you will ever have. Do not send me one cent. Get the coupon in the mails today—sure.**

**Harry A. Smith** 916-231 N. Fifth Ave. Chicago

**H. A. SMITH**
**Room 916-231 N. Fifth Ave.**
**CHICAGO, ILL.**

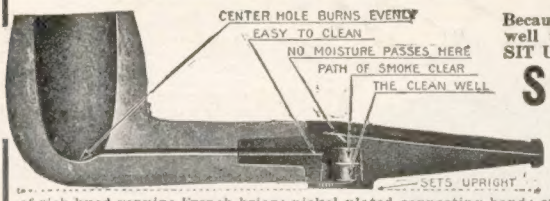
Ship me a No. 2 L. C. Smith F. O. B. Chicago, as described in this advertisement. I will pay you the $40.00 balance of the SPECIAL $48.80 purchase price, at the rate of $2.50 per month. The title to remain in you until fully paid for. It is understood that I have five days in which to examine and try the typewriter. If I choose not to keep it I will carefully repack it and return it to the express agent. It is understood that you give the standard guarantee for one year.

*Name* .....

*Address* .....

.....

# THE PIPE OF PEACE




**Because it is no trouble to keep clean—it has removable moisture well that empties, can be put down anywhere—and IT WILL SIT UP! That's why we call it**

## SITTING BULL

It can't spill. The hot bowl itself does not rest upon anything. Mouth moisture can't get by the well and foul the bowl and smoke channel, which means **A CLEAN, DRY AND FRAGRANT SMOKE.** Moistened tobacco means immediate deterioration that changes its rich flavor. SITTING BULL will give you the richest smoke you have ever enjoyed. Don't blame the innocent tobacco any more.

**SITTING BULL** Sturdy shape with bowl and smoke channel of rich-hued genuine French briar; nickel plated connecting band; super-gutta percha mouthpiece—**75 CENTS.** Same with sterling silver band, **$1.00.** Sent by parcel post anywhere in the world. Money back if not satisfactory.

## Men, in Your Leisure Moments

You can earn from $5 to $20 a week in or out of a job during your spare time selling the SITTING BULL. You take no risk. No experience required. We tell you how. Many of our men have met with such wonderful success that they are now devoting their entire time to this work. It is the cleanest, highest grade way to earn extra money. **WRITE AT ONCE** asking for particulars. SITTING BULL CORPORATION, 607 W. 51st Street, New York City.

## Become a TRAFFIC EXPERT

Earn $35 to $100 a week. Exceptional opportunities await the trained traffic man with railways and industrial shippers. Our free literature explains fully the possibilities for good salaries and rapid advancement in this uncrowded and lucrative field, and how

**We Train You By Mail**

at home, in spare time without interference with your present occupation. The LaSalle course in Traffic and Transportation is simple and thorough—readily and easily mastered—the practical work of highly efficient traffic experts. Endorsed by prominent railway and industrial traffic officials. Small cost—terms to suit you. Mail postal today for catalog and free book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One." **MAIL POSTAL NOW!**

**LaSALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, Dept. 735-C Chicago, Illinois**

## LAW BOOK FREE

**Read Our 80-Page Book Before Enrolling for Any Law Course.** Tells how to judge the claims of correspondence schools, also explains the **American School's** simple new method of home law instruction. Prepared by 56 of America's greatest legal authorities—28 more subjects and 30 more authors than any other correspondence law course. 13 volume Law Library, 60 Text Books, and 36 Case Books furnished every student. Don't fail to get this book before taking up the study of law. Send for it today.

**AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE**
**Dept. 107B, Drexel Avenue and 58th Street, Chicago, U. S. A.**

## BE A TRAVELING SALESMAN

Hundreds of good positions now open. No experience required to get one of them. Write today for list of openings offering opportunities to earn Big Money while you learn and testimonials from hundreds of our students who are earning $100 to $500 a month. Address nearest office. Dept. 500

**NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION**
**Chicago, New York, San Francisco**

LEARN TO **PAINT SIGNS and SHOW CARDS**

I teach you personally, by mail, in a short time. Oldest and largest School. Big field, work interesting. You can **EARN $18 TO $45 A WEEK** Fritzner, Minn., wrote: "Did job after first lesson, got $10, profit $7.05." Crawford, B. C., says: "Earned $200.00 while taking course." Get literature, samples, guarantee—all FREE.

**DETROIT SCHOOL OF LETTERING**
Established 1899. 307 D. S. of L. Bldg. Detroit, Mich.

## FREE This Complete Set of Drawing Instruments

$15.00 Draftsman's Complete Working outfit, absolutely free. They do not cost you a penny on this offer. Write today for particulars. Do it NOW.

**$150 to $300 a Month**

My graduates are earning from $150.00 to $300.00 a month and more. **Write Today.** Send for my free book on drafting. No obligations. Write now.

**Chief Draftsman Dobe,** Div. B 107
**Engineer's Equipment Co., Chicago**

## 30 Days FREE TRIAL

and ***freight prepaid*** on the new 1916 **"RANGER"** bicycle. **Write at once** and get our *big catalog* and *special offers* before buying.

**Marvelous improvements.** Extraordinary values in our 1916 price offers. *You cannot afford to buy* without getting our *latest propositions.* WRITE TODAY.

**Boys,** be a **"Rider Agent"** and make big money taking orders for bicycles and supplies. Get our *liberal terms* on a sample to introduce the new **"RANGER."**

**Tires,** equipment, sundries and everything in the bicycle fine **half usual prices.**

**MEAD CYCLE CO., DEPT. H-31, CHICAGO**

## TYPEWRITE THE NEW WAY

***80 to 100 Words a Minute GUARANTEED!***

Totally new system. Based on *Gymnastic* Finger Training! Brings amazing speed—perfect accuracy—BIG SALARIES. Easy for anyone. First day shows results. Learn while working.

**48-Page Book Free** illustrates and explains all. Gives letters from hundreds with salaries **doubled** and **trebled.** A revelation as to **speed** and **salary** possible to typists. Postal will do, but write today—NOW.

**THE TULLOSS SCHOOL, 1207 College Hill, Springfield, Ohio**

## GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

offer employment for life at a salary ranging from $800 to $1800 per year, with short hours under pleasant conditions and no fear of "layoffs" or strikes. American citizens 18 or over are eligible. Our 64-page booklet contains list of positions, requirements, etc., and tells how you can prepare for "Exams" under the personal supervision of a former U. S. Civil Service Secretary-Examiner. Booklet is **FREE,** without obligation. **Write today.**

**PATTERSON CIVIL SERVICE SCHOOL**
**47 News Bldg., ROCHESTER, N. Y.**

## COPY THIS SKETCH

and let me see what you can do with it. Illustrators and cartoonists earn from $20 to $125 a week or more. My practical system of personal individual lessons by mail will develop your talent. Fifteen years successful work for newspapers and magazines qualifies me to teach you. Send me your sketch of President Wilson with 6c in stamps and I will send you a test lesson plate, also collection of drawings showing possibilities for YOU.

**The Landon School** of Illustrating and Cartooning
**1429 SCHOFIELD BUILDING, CLEVELAND, O.**

## FREE

BOOKLET ENTITLED "TYPEWRITER MECHANICS BROUGHT DOWN TO DATE" TELLING HOW TO SELECT INTELLIGENTLY ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET THE BEST AND SAVE THE MOST

GET OUR SPECIAL OFFER TELLING HOW YOU CAN WITH LITTLE EFFORT EASILY EARN THIS LATEST AND GREATEST STANDARD (SINGLE SHIFT) TYPEWRITER

On Letter or Post Card simply say "Mail Particulars"

**WOODSTOCK TYPEWRITER CO., Dept. L-342, CHICAGO, ILL.**

## Electrical BOOK FREE

Learn how you can become an Electrical Engineer and earn $150 to $250 monthly. No experience necessary. We easily train you in your spare time to enter this fascinating work. Demand for electrical experts exceeds the supply—decide to fit yourself for one of these well-paid jobs. 56-page book, which tells you how to do it, sent FREE.

**AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE**
**Dept. 6784, Drexel Ave. and 58th Street, Chicago, U. S. A.**

# THE ARGOSY

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## "HAMPTON OF THE HEIGHTS"

**By JOSEPH IVERS LAWRENCE**

will be the Complete Novel in the August Argosy, opening the eighty-third volume of the magazine. It's a mystery story of exceptional interest, treating of a New York neighborhood hitherto unexploited in fiction.

## "DROPPING INTO MEXICO"

***By F. K. SCRIBNER***

is a Short Story of vivid experiences that fell to an aeronaut just across the southern border-line that will make the August Argosy of timely significance.

## "HIS ISLE OF REFUGE"

***By FRED C. SMALE***

starts in the next number. It is a Serial of unique nature, being without a hero in the real sense of the word. But this does not lessen its all-compelling lure.

**This August issue will be a hummer. The above are only three of the many features.**

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 8 West Fortieth Street, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E. C., London
FRANK A. MUNSEY, President RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer
Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, $1.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $1.50 to Canada, and $2.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered
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# Classified Advertising

## The Purpose of this Department

**is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.**

**Classified Advertising Rates in The Munsey Magazines**

| | Line Rate. | |
|---|---|---|
| Munsey's Magazine | $2.00 | Special Combination Line Rate $4.49 Less 3% cash discount. |
| The Argosy | 1.30 | |
| Railroad Man's Magazine | .80 | |
| All-Story Weekly | .60 | |
| | $4.70 | |

**August Argosy Forms Close June 16th.**

*"A New Force In Business" is a booklet that tells how to advertise successfully in the Classified Department of the Munsey Magazines. Mailed anywhere on request.*

## AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

**MAN WANTED AS EXCLUSIVE AGENT.** We manufacture six styles self-wringing Mops, for all purposes, including an absolutely new combination **Scrubbing Brushmop** that is self-wringing. Every woman wants this proven success. New inexperienced men make $9 per day. One man made $120 the second week, no investment. Send for catalogue and exclusive territory proposition that will make you independent. Hilker Mop Co., 2620 W. Grand Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

**SMOKER WANTED.—WE WANT SILENT SALESMEN** who will smoke a pipe and get paid for it. Send no money, just write for particulars. M. H. Putnam, 607 West 51st Street, New York City.

**AGENTS WANTED.—AGENTS MAKE 500 PER CENT Profit** selling "Novelty Sign Cards." Merchants buy 10 to 100 on sight. 800 varieties. Catalogue Free. Sullivan Co., 1233 W. Van Buren Street, Chicago, Ill.

**Mighty Repeat Money Making Marvel.** 8 men order 47,620 pkgs. first 16 days. Kalomite revolutionizes clothes washing ideas; $100 wkly. repeat order business. Abolishes rubbing, washboards, washing machines; $1000 guarantee. Absolutely harmless; Kalomite works wonders; no experience necessary; credit granted; get overwhelming proof. Equitable Corp., Dept. 381, 215 Superior, Chicago.

**AGENTS: $30.00 A WEEK SELLING GUARANTEED HOSIERY** for men, women and children. Guaranteed to last four months without holes. Latest and best agents' proposition. Thomas Mfg. Co., 207 North Street, Dayton, Ohio.

**SWELL SUIT FREE FOR 2 HOURS' WORK.** Show it to your friends and make $5.00 an hour in your spare time. We show how. Costs nothing to try. Write quick for measure blank and our handy sample outfit. All Free. We deliver everything free. Look into this. Paragon Tailoring Co., Dept. 702, Chicago.

**WOULD YOU INVEST $100.00 IN OUR PREMIUM PUNCH BOARD DEALS,** if we could show you how to double your money within 30 days? There is a big demand for our premiums. Washington Sales Company, Dept. A, Chicago.

**AGENTS—ARE YOU LOOKING FOR BIG PROFITS** and a sure repeat business? Write for Ho-Ro-Co Skin Soap, Perfume and Toilet Article plan, the best ever put out. Rothco, 222 N. Second Street, St. Louis, Mo.

**AGENTS—500% PROFIT. Free Sample Gold and Silver Sign Letters** for store fronts and office windows. Anyone can put on. Big demand everywhere. Write today for liberal offer to agents. Metallic Letter Co., 409 N. Clark, Chicago, U. S. A.

**BIG KANSAS COMPANY** will start ambitious people in fast growing mail order business; any locality. Make $3000 yearly; spare time; no canvassing; no experience; we furnish everything; new unique selling methods free. Eyestone, Pres., 606 W. 7th, Pittsburg, Kansas.

**TRAVELING SALESMEN:** Your clothes made to measure without cost for placing tailoring lines featuring six special prices, no extra charges, with merchants. Write for particulars. J. W. Jones, 304 Mid City Bank, Chicago.

**1916'S SENSATION! 11 PIECE TOILET ARTICLE SET** selling like blazes at $1, with $1 carving set **free!** Whirlwind stunt! Newcome made $18 one day! Write B. Pierce Company, 906 Lake Street, Chicago.

**Armstrong Earned $67.50 First Day** selling our new business necessity. Retails $5.00 to $30.00. Agents profit 150%. Buyer satisfied or money back. No competition. Exclusive territory. Free sample. Sayers Co., 412 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

**WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, FURNISHING EVERYTHING;** men and women, $30.00 to $200.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories," home or small room anywhere. No canvassing. Opportunity lifetime. Booklet free. Ragsdale Co., Drawer 92, East Orange, N. J.

**ACT QUICK! AUTOMOBILE GASOLINE GOING UP. SELL GASO-TONIC.** Equals gasoline at 3c a gallon. Eliminates Carbon. Dollar an hour profit. Sales guaranteed. White Mfg. Co., Dept. L, Cincinnati, Ohio.

**AGENTS—400 SNAPPY ALUMINUM SPECIALTIES AND UTENSILS** means a sale in every home. General Sales Course Free. $50.00 a week sure. Answer quick. American Aluminum Mfg. Co., Division S-46, Lemont, Ill.

## AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

**AGENTS—BIG SUMMER SELLER.** Something new—Concentrated Soft Drinks; just add water. Delicious drinks in a jiffy. Popular for the home, picnics, parties, socials, etc. Small packages; carry in pocket. Enormous demand. Agents making $6 to $12 a day. Outfit free to workers. Just a postal today. E. M. Feltman, 4702 3rd Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

**$50.00 A WEEK UP. ALL THE FREE CLOTHES YOU WANT TO WEAR** simply to advertise us. Write today for self-measuring blanks, style chart, big book of samples, etc. Send no money. A postal card brings all. We pay expressage on everything. American Woolen Mills Co., Dept. 702, Chicago.

**AGENTS: WE MANUFACTURE THE FASTEST SELLING** household article on the market. Exclusive territory. Fine profits. Pelham Manufacturing Company, Smith Building, Pelham, N. Y.

**FREE SAMPLE—NOSPLASH WATER STRAINERS SELL THEMSELVES.** No talking—experience unnecessary. Daily profits $5 upwards. Send 2c (mailing cost). L. K. D. Union Filter Co., New York.

**$7.60 DAILY! STARTLING, SENSATIONAL INVENTION!** Magic Sticky Fly String. Cheapest, best fly catching device. Costs only 1¼ cents a week. Write quick—season here! L. Rodolph, 208-216 N. Fifth Avenue, Chicago.

**AGENTS—EARN BIG COMMISSIONS** selling $20.00 value all-wool made-to-measure suits for $10.75 retail. No experience necessary. Chicago Woolen Mills, Dept. 119, 833 Jackson Blvd., Chicago.

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

**LEARN A NEW BUSINESS THAT WILL EARN YOU $3,000** to $6,000 yearly in professional fees making and fitting a foot specialty. Easily learned by anyone at home, in a few weeks at small expense; no further capital required, no goods to buy, job hunting, soliciting or agency. Openings everywhere with all the trade you can attend to. To obtain particulars state something of your abilities, occupation, etc. Stephenson Laboratory, 5-13 Irvington Street, Boston, Mass.

**ADVERTISERS, MAIL DEALERS! OUR ADVERTISING GUIDE** gives rates, circulation of 2,000 different publications, includes 30 mail order plans. Sent complete 10c. Dearborn Advertising Agency, 222 Franklin Building, Chicago.

**BUILD A $5,000 BUSINESS IN TWO YEARS. LET US START YOU** in the collection business. No capital needed; big field. We teach secrets of collecting money; refer business to you. Write today for Free Pointers and new plan. American Collection Service, 11 State Street, Detroit, Mich.

## TELEGRAPHY

**LEARN TELEGRAPHY AT HOME IN HALF USUAL TIME** and trifling cost with wonderful Automatic Transmitter, the Omnigraph. Connected with sounder or buzzer sends unlimited Morse or Continental messages, at any speed, just as expert operator would. Adopted by U. S. Government. Catalog free. Omnigraph Mfg. Co., 39 R. Cortlandt Street, New York.

## ADVERTISING MEDIA

**WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GRASP THE OPPORTUNITIES** that are offered by The Munsey Magazines? Probably you have a business that cannot be advertised. Hundreds of men all over the country have made this assertion, yet they make goods that some people somewhere need and buy. We believe that it would be to your advantage to use the Classified Section of The Munsey Magazines. Many advertisers use this department month after month, year after year, which is proof positive that it is paying them. Write for booklet **"A New Force In Business"** that gives full particulars about the effectiveness of Classified Advertising in The Munsey Magazines. The Frank A. Munsey Company, 8 West Fortieth Street, New York, N. Y.

## PATENT ATTORNEYS

**PATENTS THAT PROTECT AND PAY. ADVICE AND BOOKS FREE.** Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Send sketch or model for search. Watson E. Coleman, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS PROTECT YOUR IDEAS. INFORMATION AND ADVICE FREE.** Send sketch or model for search. J. R. Smith, 724 Bond Building, Washington, D. C.

**PATENT YOUR IDEAS—$9,000 OFFERED FOR CERTAIN INVENTIONS.** Books, "How to Obtain a Patent," and "What to Invent," sent free. Send rough sketch for free report as to patentability. Manufacturers constantly writing us for patents we have obtained. We advertise your patent for sale at our expense. Established 20 years. Address Chandlee & Chandlee, Patent Attorneys, 911 F Street, Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS—TRADE-MARKS. SEND FOR MY FREE BOOK "HOW TO GET THEM."** It's full of information you should know. Joshua R. H. Potts, 8 S. Dearborn St., Chicago; 929 Chestnut St., Philadelphia; 805 G St., Washington.

**"PRIZES FOR PATENTS." "MONEY IN PATENTS."** "How to Get Your Patents and Money." "Why Some Inventors Fail." "Needed Inventions." Sent free. Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, 629 F Street, Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS.—WRITE FOR HOW TO OBTAIN A PATENT,** list of Patent Buyers, and Inventions Wanted. $1,000,000 in prizes offered for inventions. Send Sketch for free opinion as to patentability. Our **Four Books** sent free upon request. Patents advertised **Free.** We assist inventors to sell their patents. Victor J. Evans Co., Patent Attys., 756 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

**IDEAS WANTED.**—Manufacturers are writing for patents procured through me. Three books with list hundreds of inventions wanted sent free. I help you market your invention. Advice Free. R. B. Owen, 68 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C.

## MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

**Write Moving Picture Plays, $25 To $100 Each.** Big demand. Previous experience or literary talent not required. **No correspondence course.** Send today for **free details** explaining everything. E-Z Scenario Co., A-M, 609 W. 127 St., New York City.

**WRITE PHOTOPLAYS. BIG PRICES PAID. CONSTANT demand.** Devote all or spare time. Experience or correspondence course not necessary. Start work at once. Send for free details. Enterprise Publishing Co., A-Y, 3348 Lowe Avenue, Chicago.

**PHOTOPLAYS WANTED BY 48 COMPANIES; $10 TO $500 EACH PAID FOR PLAYS.** No correspondence course or experience needed; details sent free to beginners. Sell your ideas. Producers League, 331 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

**WRITE MOVING PICTURE PLAYS, SHORT STORIES, Poems;** $10 to $300 each. Constant demand. No correspondence course. Start writing and selling at once. Details free. Atlas Pub. Co., 316 Atlas Building, Cincinnati, Ohio.

## AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

**WANTED—STORIES, ARTICLES, POEMS, ETC.** We pay on acceptance. Offers submitted. Handwritten MSS. acceptable. Please send prepaid with return postage. Cosmos Magazine, 232 Stewart Building, Washington, D. C.

**PHOTO-PLAYS, PLOTS, ORIGINAL STORIES, wanted by a new company.** Submit in any form, also rejected manuscripts. Protection guaranteed. No correspondence school agency. Enclose return postage. California Scenario Co., Inc., Los Angeles, Calif.

## TYPEWRITERS

**$10 TO $15 BUYS A RE-BUILT TYPEWRITER—GOOD AS NEW.** Why pay more? Shipped on Trial. Whitehead Typewriter Company, Dept. A, 186 N. LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois.

**PRICES WRECKED. SAVE 10 TO 50% TODAY.** All makes Typewriters Nearly New and Rebuilt. **$5.00** and up. Coronas and other portable machines, **$10.00 up.** Write for catalog No. 90. Beran Typewriter Co., 58 W. Wash. St., Dept. 25A, Chicago, Ill.

## HELP WANTED

**WORK FOR UNCLE SAM. HE IS THE BEST EMPLOYER.** Big pay, sure work, easy hours, long vacations, rapid advance. Thousands of jobs open this year. I will help you get one. Write for my big **Free** Book D. Y. 18 today. Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

**MEN AND WOMEN WITH SPARE TIME CAN EARN A LOT OF EXTRA MONEY** by our new and interesting advertising plan. No Investment. No Selling. No Soliciting. **Write to-day.** Crown Mfg. Co., Dept. L-9, 20 W. Lake St., Chicago.

**WRITE NEWS ITEMS AND SHORT STORIES FOR PAY** in spare time. Copyright book and plans free. Press Reporting Syndicate, 433, St. Louis, Mo.

**WILL POSITIVELY SHOW YOU BY MAIL HOW You Can Earn $25 To $100 Week** writing advertisements. Biggest field in the world for you. Information free. Page-Davis Co., 241 Page Building, Chicago, Ill.

**I WILL START YOU EARNING $4.00 DAILY AT HOME** in spare time, silvering mirrors. No capital. Anyone can do the work. Send for free instructive booklet, giving plans of operation. G. F. Redmond, Dept. B, Boston, Mass.

**MEN OF IDEAS AND INVENTIVE ABILITY** should write for new "Lists of Needed Inventions," Patent Buyers, and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Advice **free.** Randolph & Co., Patent Attorneys, Dept. 40, Washington, D. C.

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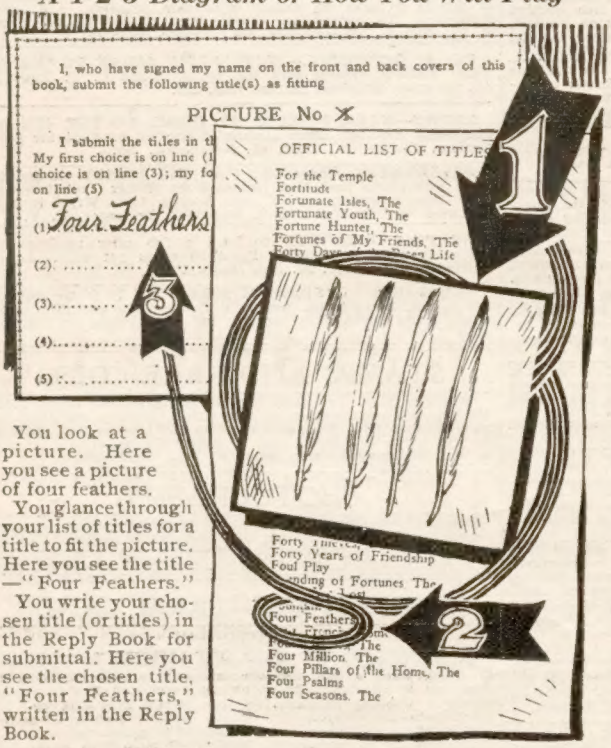


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# THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXXXII JULY, 1916 No. 4

# A Secret of the Bronx

by

Seward W. Hopkins

Author of "A Mystery of Roscoe Conkling Park," "Too Terrible for War," etc.

A FULL BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL COMPLETE.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE FACE OF THOMAS BATTERSON.

WHEN Joyce Kendry swung her red car from Tremont Avenue into Boston Road and came to a stop at the foot of the Subway stairs, all West Farms Square stood at attention. For Joyce Kendry was as much an institution of Tremont as the Bergen Building.

Everybody knew her. She was called the Queen of the Bronx, and for beauty the title fitted her.

But she had more than beauty. Her kindliness of heart was as well known as her gold-brown hair. She had a ready wit. Moreover, she was the daughter of James Kendry, lawyer, politician and a power in the county.

She sat in the car, known as well as her father, and a gift from him, as though perfectly unconscious that a hundred pairs of eyes were fixed on her.

"Fanning, my sister, Joyce. Joyce, Fanning."

The two, thus abruptly introduced, for a crowd had descended the stairs, looked into each other's eyes. Joyce Kendry was accustomed to introduction and the adoration of men. She smiled and held out a small white hand from which she had removed the glove.

"I am pleased to meet my brother's friend, Mr. Fanning, of whom I have heard him speak."

Fanning managed to take the outstretched hand in one of his big, strong ones, and tried to speak with an ease equal to her own. But, though upon occasion, as had been proven, he was fluent enough, words came grudgingly now. He did, however, make a fair job of it, but forgot to release her hand.

"Oh, come on," said Tom Kendry. "Let's get along. Are you two going to hold hands all day?"

Joyce laughed, and withdrew her hand, and Fanning turned red.

Two suitcases were put into the red car, the two friends got in, and under the skilful guidance of Joyce the machine swung from Boston Road into Tremont Avenue, whence it had come, went west, with Tom complacently thinking of the coming pleasure of his visit home, and Fanning conning the curves of the neck and the gold-brown hair of the girl in front of him.

A short trip past rows of business houses and banks, a few turns and the car turned into a gate.

"Behold the baronial castle," said Tom. "Here my ancestors fought and bled—"

"Fought for a living but never bled," called back Joyce.

"You misunderstood," remonstrated Tom. "Our ancestors, having been lawyers and doctors, they *did* bleed—other people. So there, Miss Fresh."

Fanning laughed. He had never spoken to girl or woman with such freedom.

His life had been a hard one; he had neither brother nor sister, and his parents had died when he was young. He had fought with the courage and strength of two men for an education that had come like a gift from the gods to Tom Kendry. Yet the fellow with plenty of money to spend and the young man who worked summers in order to attend college winters were fast friends.

They had been out of college two years, and one was plowing his way in his own line of work with the same dogged pertinacity that carried him to graduating honors, while the other was earning what the State paid for holding down a chair in a certain office in Albany.

Edgewood Terrace loomed up to Fanning as a most attractive spot for a home, and the house into which Joyce now led the way seemed almost a palace. Yet it was merely an ordinary, large, commodious, well-kept home of a successful man—not a millionaire's mansion.

Mr. Kendry was not in. Mrs. Kendry, a frail, small woman, with what Fanning thought was the sweetest mother's face he had ever seen, greeted Tom with tenderness, but shrank from his robust form of greeting her.

"Mom, my best old friend, Fanning. Heard me speak of him, eh? Best old chap—he was the stroke—"

But Mrs. Kendry was greeting Fanning and paying no attention to what her son was saying. As a matter of fact, nobody in the house had ever paid much attention to what he said.

Joyce had turned the car over to a chauffeur, who appeared from a stone garage when she drove in at the gate, and she now disappeared to change her driving suit for one more suitable for dinner.

The two friends, each carrying a suitcase, went to Tom's room. When the door was shut and the grips opened Fanning broke loose.

"Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you warn me, put me on my guard? Oh, why didn't you give me a hint?"

Kendry turned and looked at his old classmate in blank astonishment.

"What the deuce is biting you?" he asked. "Do you think the house is on fire? Think there's a mad dog under the bed. Warn you of what?"

"You let me make a fool of myself. You—you—"

Tom regarded his friend now with something like an expression of alarm.

"Are you—don't you feel well, old chap?" he asked anxiously.

"I say if I had had a hint I could have gone through it like a gentleman. You let me in for a fool."

"Are you going completely off your nut?" Tom wanted to know. "The police station isn't far from here."

"But she's so beautiful! She's a goddess! A princess royal!"

Tom's face showed acute distress. He peered anxiously at Fanning a moment, and then—

"Who is all this, may I ask?"

"Your sister."

"My—my—sis—Oh, my Lord!" With this explosion Kendry rolled on the bed in spasms of laughter. He had never thought

of Joyce as a goddess or princess. Why—she was just Joyce Kendry, his sister. A goddess! A prin—oh, it was too much.

"Wait," he gurgled between laughs. "Wait till I tell her that."

Fanning leaped at him.

"If you breathe a word I'll strangle you," he said.

Kendry subsided after another howl and they finished dressing. By this time Mr. Kendry had come home, and dinner was announced.

Mr. Kendry was in appearance what he was in fact—a solid man. His grip was as firm as Fanning's, and his voice full and deep when he welcomed the younger man.

"I am pleased to have you for a guest," he said. "I am always glad to meet a friend of Tom, but particularly you, because I have followed your career."

Even Mrs. Kendry opened her eyes at this. Nobody ever had mentioned Fanning except Tom. Tom's eyes opened, too.

Fanning did not know what to say, but did fairly well. He smiled and said, "I thank you for your kind words, but I have had very little career to follow."

Whatever Mr. Kendry was going to reply to this was cut short by the entrance of Joyce, lovelier than ever, accompanied by a man Fanning judged to be about thirty. Followed another introduction.

"Mr. Fanning, Mr. Batterson,"

Mr. Batterson was in all appearance a man of substance and of the world. They sat down to dinner, and it soon became clear to Fanning that Mr. Batterson was pretty well at home in the Kendry house. And for that reason alone he would have disliked Mr. Batterson.

Boardman Fanning was a man of quick intuitions, keen perception, and a memory unexcelled. And as he sat opposite Mr. Thomas Batterson and furtively studied his face, there came up from the lower strata of buried experience the idea that he had seen this man before, and under circumstances—hang it! What were they?

## CHAPTER II.

### THE THREAT.

CONVERSATION never lagged at the Kendry table. With Tom at home, this would have been impossible anyway. But Mr. Kendry devoted much of the time to Fanning, as if trying to draw him out, get at what was really in him.

Mr. Batterson directed his conversation to Joyce and her mother, and Tom talked incessantly, with no audience at all.

"It would seem to me," Mr. Kendry said to Fanning, "that it was a matter of some risk to take up the business of general contracting without capital. Still, your strength of will carried you through college, and will undoubtedly carry you to success in business life."

"What kind of business is that—general contracting?" asked Joyce, turning from Batterson in the middle of his sentence.

"Growing smaller all over," remarked Tom soberly.

"Thomas," reproved his gentle mother, "you should not. Really, you should not."

"Shouldn't what, mom? Grow smaller all over? No fear so long as I keep my appetite."

"Tom, if you were ten, I'd lock you in the cellar, and if you were forty I'd knock you down," cut in his father. "As it is I'll simply say be quiet."

Fanning, who had never before been in the homes of people with ample means, never had been waited upon by a servant except in a boarding-house or hotel, had some difficulty in framing his sentences to suit his surroundings.

"I am in business in a small way, Miss Kendry," he said. "On a large scale general contracting would be bidding for large work—anything big, like a bridge, a section of railroad, or canal. Then different portions of the work are sublet to smaller contractors, each in his own line. I cannot reach out to build—say a Brooklyn Bridge. I must grow. I do anything from laying a sidewalk up."

"I thought you laid a sidewalk down," remarked Tom.

"Then you could build a house."

This from Joyce, and her father and mother looked at her in alarm. They evidently had heard something on the subject of house before.

"I—well, a builder builds a house. I've never taken a contract—never tried to get a contract to build a house. I would, though, if anybody wanted me to, and then have an architect draw the plans and a builder put up the house."

"Where would you come in?"

"I would dig the cellar and do the stone work on the foundation."

Joyce said no more, and an air of relief seemed to come upon her father and mother.

Dinner over, they adjourned to a porch at the side of the house, where the men smoked. Mr. Kendry seemed a man who thoroughly enjoyed his home life. Yet he belonged to down-town clubs, the Bronx Board of Trade and several other organizations. However, his evenings were spent at home as often as possible.

Mr. Batterson seemed disinclined to leave, and Fanning wondered if he was a guest. Mrs. Kendry went inside early, Mr. Kendry took a stroll to the first corner and back, and finally Tom yawned and suggested bed. He and Fanning went upstairs together, and Tom showed Fanning his room.

"Tom," said Fanning, "who is Mr. Batterson? Don't get funny and say he is Mr. Batterson. Give me a straight answer."

"Oh, the answer is straight enough," replied Tom in a tone of disgust. "He's the guy that put the second R in Mary. He wants to marry Joyce."

Fanning took a long breath.

"Does he live in the Bronx?"

"Well, he does, and then again he doesn't. He's got barrels of money, a yacht, and owns a goodish lot of Bronx property. He's got a house on Throggs Neck—but you wouldn't know Throggs Neck from Goose Neck. It's a neck of land that runs into—well, the Sound, I guess. On one side they call it the Sound and on the other the East River. It's all water. But he has rooms in the Hotel Imperial, and—oh, I don't know. He's a rich tramp."

"Seems a good catch for a girl—beg your pardon, Tom—I meant to say a—"

"You said it. I detest the man."

"Your sister evidently does not," said Fanning.

"Oh, you never can tell about Joyce. She's one of the sphinxes. She'd jolly the devil into thinking he was a saint."

"Of course," Fanning went on, with that easy familiarity that goes with college comradeship, "it's none of my business. But I seem to have a recollection of Mr. Batterson's face, but not his name. Your sister seems pretty warm toward him, and I wouldn't like to have her fooled, even if she got a barrel of money along with it."

"If he married Joyce and I learned anything was wrong I'd shoot him as I would a mad dog," broke out Tom savagely.

"Suppose—suppose—" Fanning halted. He was about to make a proposition, but Tom's impetuous nature could not be trusted.

"Suppose what?"

"Oh, nothing. I was going to make an inane remark. I was going to say suppose it comes out all right?"

Tom looked his friend squarely in the face.

"You're a confounded liar. That is *not* what you were going to say."

"Well," answered Fanning, laughing, "I'll say this. Suppose we go to bed and hope nothing is wrong."

"But hang it! I know you believe there is."

"Not enough to bet on. I'll try to think."

"It seems queer," Tom remarked, speaking slowly and thoughtfully, "that a man with a stain on him could put one over on my father. Dad's a shrewd lawyer, and can pick his man. If there was anything wrong about Batterson *he* ought to know it, or suspect it, at least."

"There is food for thought in that," rejoined Fanning. "Well—"

Steps were heard on the stairs.

"Well, good night," Tom said. "Sleep tight and have pleasant dreams. I prefer none myself. Just why people should, out of politeness, wish each other only a doze I don't know. Dreamless sleep for mine. S'long, Board."

When Tom had gone Boardman Fanning sat down, folded his arms, and remained perfectly still for a full half hour. Then he got up, drove a clenched fist into an open palm, and said:

"I'll find out. She is miles above me, and not for me, but I'm not going to see her life spoiled by a villain."

He undressed and went to bed. Sleep came grudgingly, but it did come, and his sleep was what Tom wanted—dreamless.

They were not early risers at Kendry's, and the sun was rather high when Fanning tumbled out of bed. Immediately his eye lighted upon a little piece of white paper, folded, that had been thrust under his door.

At the same moment he heard Tom's voice, evidently coming his way. He caught up the paper and shoved it under a pillow.

Tom came in, half dressed.

"Morn'n', Old Top," was his greeting. "Sleep?"

"Bully."

"Me, too, only—say, this house has gone batty, and that's not a pun on Batterson."

"Why? What do you mean? Did he sleep here?"

"No, but I'm sure I heard some one or some *thing* wandering through the hall in the night."

Fanning thought of the folded paper.

"Perhaps somebody was taken sick in the night."

"That sort of thing doesn't occur in this house. If doctors depended on the Kendrys for a living—well, good-by doctors. No, it wasn't like a person after a hot water bottle or anything like that. It was a stealthy step."

"Any soft step—not to wake sleepers—is a stealthy step."

"Oh, you be hanged. Hurry up and dress. I'm hungry."

Tom went off whistling and Fanning, after shutting his door and locking it, took the paper from its hiding place. Unfolding it, his amazement cannot be described when he read:

> If you value your life leave here. Don't look at Joyce so much.

That was all, but it was enough to make Fanning stand stupidly staring at the poorly written words and seeing nothing.

## CHAPTER III.

### TRYING TO REASON IT OUT.

WHEN he had recovered from the coma into which the note had sent him, Fanning read it again. Then he sat down and started on a train of deductions that probably would have led nowhere, even if continued. But Tom's voice recalled him to his senses and he hurriedly dressed.

During the process of washing and getting himself into his clothes his face was grave. Not with fear—he was not given to that uncomfortable emotion.

When, however, he met the family at the breakfast table he was smiling, and there was nothing in his manner that would indicate anything out of the ordinary. The note was snugly tucked away in his vest pocket.

If Joyce Kendry had appeared lovely to him in her automobile driving clothes, and then still lovelier in her modest dinner dress, her beauty and grace rose to transcendental proportions in his eyes when he saw her in her simple morning gown. It was an entrancing breakfast to Fanning.

"What'll usn's do to-day?" asked Tom. "Fishing's good."

Now, of all sports, Fanning liked good fishing best. Had there been no Joyce Kendry, or had she been married, or exceedingly plain, he would have chopped his breakfast in two, or have gone without it, in order to hurry to some spot where fish might possibly be caught. But a glance at that face across the table—

Mr. Kendry ate slowly, said little, but seemed to be thinking deeply. Fanning judged that, being a lawyer and a busy man, he went over in his mind at the breakfast table the business of the day that would demand his full mental powers.

He did not waste his strength in futile conversation. That was reserved for the relaxation of the evening.

"I never heard there was very good fishing around New York," Fanning said in reply to Tom's suggestion. "Nothing in the rivers any more."

"Oh, we'd have to go some distance."

"I heard Batterson say there was good fishing around Oyster Bay," remarked Mr. Kendry.

"But Batterson can go in his yacht," objected Tom.

"Have you ever been aboard his yacht?" Fanning looked at Tom as he asked the question, but swept his glance around so that almost before the last word was cold he seemed to be asking Joyce.

"Never was asked," grunted Tom.

"That is hardly fair," said Joyce. "You have been invited. We all have. It is strange, too, that here is a family of four, with a friend who visits their house, and who has repeatedly invited all to sail on his yacht, yet not one has ever accepted. Mama cannot go on the water at all, papa is too busy to bother, Tom's away, and—"

She flushed slightly as she halted in her explanations.

Fanning wanted to ask why she had not availed herself of the invitations. Instead he turned to Tom.

"What sort of yacht is it?" he inquired in an impersonal way. He had not, however, forgotten the note in his vest pocket.

"Well, from his own description," replied Tom, "she's some boat. I believe she's about a hundred and forty feet over all. Up to date oil burner, and all that sort of

thing. He boasted she could do twenty-five knots an hour."

Breakfast was over, the maid had begun to clear the table, Mrs. Kendry had gone, and Joyce sat idly twisting a salt shaker on the cloth.

Mr. Kendry rose.

"I've a little time to spare and would like to see you a moment in the den," he said, looking at Tom.

Thereupon Fanning, who could talk with Mr. Kendry on business matters with an intelligence and fluency that charmed the astute lawyer, became tongue-tied. He felt that he should go—to his room, outside and smoke, anywhere. But the magnetism of that face across the table held him there till he felt like a stupid fool.

"Well," said Joyce, "whatever you and Tom decide to do, I hope you will enjoy it. It's just the day for the water, if you decide upon fishing."

He wanted to ask what she was going to do. If she was free, he wanted to be in her company. If she had something on hand he would go with Tom—fishing, bull fighting, aeroplaning, anything.

She said nothing, however, and again his delicacy prevented the question.

"But I must get busy," she said, rising. "This is not an idle rich house, Mr. Fanning. We each have our work to do, even mama. Have you a cigar? Tom usually smokes cigarettes. Papa—wait."

"I have—" began Fanning, fishing in his pockets, but he hadn't.

She drew a box from the sideboard and offered it. He took one.

It was a delicate hint to get out of the way and he knew it. He spoke lightly, as lightly as he could to this divinity, and went out on the side piazza. There he sat in an easy chair and began to study the strange note that had been pushed under his door.

It was no new thing for people to be warned that in order to save their lives they should go elsewhere. But such warnings were given in atmospheres very different from the calm, sweet, peaceful home life of the Kendrys. And to men who had lived very different lives from his.

There was not an act in all his life that he regretted nor one that could cause hatred in another.

Of course, this warning had to do in some way with Batterson. Jealousy he could understand. But he had never been in that house before. He had not been alone with Joyce. Batterson himself had monopolized her.

No, there was something beside jealousy in this, although jealousy might be an ingredient in the pie.

Where had he seen—what did he know of the man—and was his name really Batterson?

What memory he had of having seen the fellow before was so vague, so indistinct, that it seemed as if they might have met in some former state of existence. Batterson was but little older than he. Fanning was twenty-five. Batterson could not be more than thirty, or perhaps thirty-one. They might have been children together. Yet that was not the memory that was striving to break through the veil that time had used to envelop the past in mystery.

But who could have written the note?

He began at the beginning, which was Mr. Kendry himself. He certainly was not the sort of man to sneak a note under a door. Tom would know nothing about it. Joyce—no. Mrs. Kendry—he paused here in his reasoning.

Mrs. Kendry was, undoubtedly, a woman of refinement. But Joyce was her daughter. Fine women with fine qualities had ambitions for their daughters. Batterson was rich. He, Fanning, was poor. He was making a struggle, and gaining, but compared to Batterson he was a pauper.

It might be a fine woman's way of getting rid of a dangerous man who had potentialities as a rival. Take it all in all, it looked like Mrs. Kendry.

But surely the writing was not hers, nor did it appear to be disguised.

A servant! Fanning had seen the maid who waited on the table. He had seen the chauffeur. But why should any servant write such a note? How could a servant, except the maid, know that he had looked at Joyce?

It must have been Mrs. Kendry.

Tom came out with his face flushed.

"Good old governor," he laughed. "I thought I was in for a scolding. Not so, best friend. But—"

"Well?"

"Sha'n't."

"Don't."

"What do you say to a cruise?" Tom asked. "Hire a cabin boat, eh? Take in the whole Sound?"

Fanning started. Surely his deductions

were correct. He was not wanted at the Kendrys'.

"I think—" He was about to say that he had to go back to his work when the sound of a motor was heard, and Batterson rolled up to the curb.

"Damn!" said Tom under his breath.

"Glad to find you idle," Batterson said cheerily as he came upon the veranda. "Came on purpose. Going to take a trip up the Sound. Want you to go. What say?"

Tom looked straight ahead of him, thinking.

"What about it, Board?" he asked, turning to Fanning.

"Why, if the decision is left to me, I should be pleased to accept," he answered. In his mind there was a resolve to learn if his life *was* in danger from this man.

"All right, then," Tom said, but he sighed as he got up to prepare for the trip.

## CHAPTER IV.

### WHAT'S THIS?

FANNING followed Tom up-stairs, for he, too, had some preparations to make for the yachting trip.

"Tom," he said, when they were alone, "for a man we don't like Batterson seems to be showing some good points."

Kendry turned and looked gloomily at his friend.

"Oh, I don't know," was his enigmatical answer. "You never can tell."

"How did he ever get your goat like this?"

"To tell you the truth I don't know. I never liked the fellow from the first time I saw him."

"Yet," continued Fanning, "Batterson is a good looking chap, and with his money Joyce will—"

"Will you shut up about that?"

"How did he get his hooks in?" Fanning was enjoying Tom's flurry of temper. "How did your sister make the gentleman's acquaintance?"

"The Second Field Artillery of the National Guard has its armory on Franklin Avenue. Joyce attended an entertainment and ball there and met Batterson."

"Is Batterson a member of the Artillery?"

"Batterson a soldier!" Tom fairly snorted with scorn. "That fellow?"

"Well, he won your father's regard at least."

Tom mused a moment, then said slowly: "That is one of the mysteries."

They went on dressing, and as he changed the various articles he carried in his pockets from one vest to another Fanning came upon the strange note.

For a moment he was strongly inclined to show it to Tom and see what he had to say. Then a flood of caution came over him, and he put the note in a fresh pocket. He did not, could not, doubt Tom Kendry's friendship and loyalty. But Tom was not the entire Kendry family.

Nothing more had been said about the footsteps Tom had heard in the night. If he had asked about the matter and received any information and had kept it to himself he must have good reason. If he did not wish to speak Fanning would not ask.

When they returned to Batterson they found an entirely changed man. He had become, in the short time they were up-stairs, taciturn and apparently sullen.

Tom went to find his mother and Joyce to bid them good-by for a few days, and when he rejoined Fanning there was a peculiar light in his eyes that had not been there before.

Fanning knew that something had happened in those few minutes that had changed the atmosphere. Tom proved it. He laid his hand on Batterson's shoulder and asked in a strangely gentle voice, "Do you want to call the trip off?"

Batterson's manner changed astonishingly. He seemed to shake off his morbidity as a Newfoundland dog shakes off water.

"Call it off? Of course not. Come along. Call it off! Why, what sort of a fool do you think I am?"

Batterson ran his own car. Tom and Fanning sat together, and Batterson sat alone and drove. He proved a careful driver, and Tom had little to say.

Fanning wondered what could possibly have taken place in so short a time to bring about these changes in tempers. He wondered if Joyce had also been brought under the evil spell.

At Pelham Avenue there is a hotel. Batterson rolled to the curb and stopped the car.

"Come in and have a drink," he said abruptly, and with an air of authority.

Then as if recollecting himself he laughed and added:

"I'm a little out of sorts. I do want a drink. Won't you come and join me?"

"But I don't drink," answered Fanning.

Tom nudged him.

"We'll go you one, Batterson, for medicinal purposes," he said, and was on the ground as quickly as the owner of the car.

Fanning, his mind groping in a fog, got down more slowly, and the three entered Kipp's together. The drink did seem to have some medicinal effect, for when they had resumed their journey and had got into Pelham Parkway, all signs of sullenness, if it had been sullenness, vanished. Then the drive took on the color of a real pleasure trip instead of a funeral.

Batterson took the shore route when he reached Pelham Bay Park, and then Fanning really did enjoy it. This fine drive led him to the City Island road, and they had reached the end of their journey when they crossed City Island bridge.

"There she is," said Batterson, pointing to a fine white steam yacht anchored some distance off shore. "Isn't she a beauty?"

Fanning, who had, in his college career, seen many steam yachts, but had never been on board one, showed his admiration.

"She *is* a beauty," he admitted.

Batterson put his machine in a garage, and at the end of a pier got into a launch that was waiting. They were soon on board.

This is not a yachting story and cannot go into details of the trip, nor tell of all the luxuries of the Sapphire. Suffice, that nothing that money could produce in the way of yachting comfort was lacking.

To Fanning it was all like enchantment. When they got into the Sound and he sat in a big deck chair with one of Batterson's cigars alight, he felt the first longing for wealth that had ever entered his mind.

He dreamed of himself as the owner of such a yacht as the Sapphire, and, with Joyce Kendry by his side, steaming—steaming—anywhere, everywhere, it mattered not, so long as she was with him. He forgot Batterson and Tom. He was absorbed in his dream.

Then suddenly he woke up. He realized that he, without a thousand dollars to his name that was not tied up in a doubtful business venture, he, who laid stone sidewalks and dug cellars, and who took any old job that might pay a dollar, was mad even to think of Joyce Kendry as a possible wife.

"I'm an ass."

And he said it aloud. Tom laughed.

"Well, nobody ever denied it, Board," he remarked. "Still, I don't see any reason why you should proclaim the fact. Let others find it out. What was the particular asinine act that stung you to repentance just then?"

Fanning colored, and looked out over the water.

"Oh," he replied, "I was thinking of a good job I could have had and failed to bid."

Fanning slept that night in a stateroom such as he never knew existed in any ship—an interior done in white and gold, a bed, not a berth, and every convenience the finest hotel could afford.

And so the time passed. Batterson was a most generous host.

The third day found them on the Atlantic. The Sapphire proved an able seaboat. They became ocean tramps, going hither and yon as the whims of either of them might suggest.

They put into ports and went ashore. They entertained people with whom Batterson was acquainted. It was a royal time.

In his cabin Fanning read the scrap of paper a dozen times.

"There is somebody in that house who is insane," he told himself. "Whatever happened that day between Batterson and Joyce has nothing to do with me. But certainly, for a man who wants to murder me Batterson is taking a strange way to accomplish his purpose."

Fishing was proposed.

"I'll tell you what," Batterson said one morning. "We'll fish for a prize."

The Sapphire was then out of sight of land. Not a sail, not a stack was visible.

"Shoot," Tom rejoined. "We've done everything I thought possible. If your magic wand has any further surprises let's have them."

"Of course," said Batterson, "I'm out of it. But I'll fish to keep you company."

From his stateroom he brought two of the most expensive marine glasses.

"These glasses," he said, "are the prizes. This is not a competitive match. But to win one of these you've got to catch a fish of a certain size, and also a certain amount of fish in weight."

"How much? How long?" asked Tom.

Batterson laughed.

"That's for me to know. I shall write

down the length and weight, place the figures in an envelope, and seal it."

And he did so, while they watched.

Two launches were lowered. Tom got into one with a man to run it. Fanning went in the other.

"Keep away from each other," said Batterson. "Just fish. I'll pick you up."

The yacht went on.

"Damn his black heart!"

Fanning looked in amazement at the sailor who was running his launch. The words were like an explosion.

"What's that?" Fanning asked.

"I'll tell you what's that, sir. Has that man anything against you?"

"He has not shown it, why do you ask?"

"Well, he hates me. I—well, no matter about that. But you see where the yacht is, and you see the other launch is a good distance away. The tank of this launch was filled, and has been emptied, and she's leaking. Looks like a put up job to me."

The wind was freshening, and a choppy sea now began to toss the helpless launch about like a cork. Fanning recognized the gravity of the situation, but did not believe Batterson had planned it.

"It has only just begun to leak," he said. "What happened?"

"Well, the sea-cock has been tampered with in some way so that it lasted long enough for the yacht to get away."

"Oh, fudge. Let's get to work and stop the leak. Batterson had nothing to do with this."

"I say he did."

"Well, while we're quarreling about it, the boat may be sinking. I don't see any water. I think you've gone crazy."

"Oh, you do! I'll show you!"

Before Fanning could suspect his intention the fellow sprang at him with a wrench.

Had this been Tom instead of a man whose muscles had been made like iron by hard work, that would have been the end of him. Fanning grappled, and for ten minutes fought furiously for his life. At the end of that time his assailant lay unconscious in the bottom of the boat.

Fanning, though sore and bruised, and almost breathless, was unhurt. He examined the motor. He examined the tank. It was full of gasoline.

"Another maniac to deal with," he reflected, and went on fishing, disregarding the unconscious man on the bottom boards.

He caught nothing, and finally gave it up. He lighted a cigar, and with the wrench still in his hand sat calmly smoking and waiting for the yacht to pick him up.

## CHAPTER V.

### ASTOUNDING INFORMATION.

INCIDENTALLY Fanning read the note over again. He had started the motor and was steering toward Tom's launch, which he could barely see.

The man in the bottom of the boat stirred, moaned, and became still again. But Fanning kept the wrench close at hand.

His thoughts were busy.

Was this man really a maniac, or had he been ordered to attack and make away with him? If so he had gone about the business in the crudest and most bungling manner possible. Why not a pistol shot?

Still, a pistol shot would possibly reach Tom's ears. Sound carries far on the water.

Why not a knife then? A body found floating, stabbed, leads to a charge of murder.

But the body could be weighted and sunk.

The man was assuredly a maniac. He had begun the attack by assailing Batterson himself. Why the necessity of the lie about the gasoline? Also that concerning the sea-cock?

The boat was not leaking. If Batterson had any desire to kill him he could accomplish it without killing another man and losing a costly yacht tender.

He read the note again. He knew it by heart, but it fascinated him. He had become obsessed by the thing.

He would study each word, the shape of each letter, and try to inform himself whether it was natural handwriting or disguised.

He became aware suddenly that the tender must be very fast. He was getting nearer Tom's launch so rapidly that no ordinary boat could accomplish it. Then he discovered that Tom was coming toward him. They were soon within hailing distance.

"What luck?" called Fanning.

"Not a blamed thing. I gave up in disgust. You?"

"Same thing. I don't believe there's a fish within a hundred miles."

"Where's your man?"

"Down here asleep. He attacked me

with the motor wrench, and I had to knock him out. He's gone nutty."

"Sailors do sometimes, I've heard."

"Well, so do landlubbers for that matter."

"Let's have a look at him."

Again there came to Fanning the strong inclination to show Tom the note, and compare the warning with the attack, to see if there could be any connection. And again the same strange feeling of caution came over him and held him back.

"Here comes the yacht," said Tom. The big white hull was looming up.

"Launches, ahoy!" they soon heard. And in twenty minutes or less they were on board, the launches had been swung to their berths, and Fanning had told his story to Batterson.

The owner of the Sapphire stood with his hands in his pockets looking gravely at Fanning while he spoke. The sailor had been taken below to receive care.

"This is an amazing thing," Batterson said. "I never had any trouble with the fellow, nor with any of my men. Why, I chose him, as I chose the other for Tom's launch, because he was so faithful. I wouldn't have had such a thing happen for all I'm worth."

"Oh, you didn't do it, Batterson," put in Tom. "So long as Board isn't hurt the incident is closed. What about the fish?"

The gravity disappeared from Batterson's face and he laughed.

"But I don't see any fish."

"No. You show us some pretty toys and put us out to sea in cockle-shells and tell us to fish. You pick out one spot in the whole Atlantic, apparently, where there isn't a fish, never was a fish, never will be a fish. What was that fellow's name—Tantalus, who did things like that?"

"Here is the envelope," said Batterson, taking it from a little case. "Now we shall see."

He opened it, took out the paper and handed it to Tom.

"Read it."

"Well, by Jove!" Tom handed the paper to Fanning.

On the paper was written: "No fish."

"Allow me to present the prizes," said Batterson, handing each of them a marine-glass.

"Batterson, you are a wonder," Tom declared with great unction. "You are a king of entertainers and everything that goes to make life gay and worth while. But now will you tell us why you did this insane thing?"

"I wanted amusement, and wanted to give you fellows a little surprise. That's all. Now we'll start back for the gay little city of New York."

The return trip was but a repetition of the voyage out. They arrived at Mr. Kendry's house at four o'clock one afternoon. They had been gone nine days.

Fanning's mind was in a whirl. During the return run he had not set eyes on the man who attacked him in the launch. He had made frequent inquiries as to his condition, and Batterson had replied each time that the fellow was doing very well.

Mrs. Kendry and Joyce asked many questions about the trip.

Fanning sat alone on the side porch smoking while Tom was with his mother, and Joyce out among her friends, and his mind could not find its balance.

"This is the finest, the happiest home I was ever in," he said to himself, "and yet there is something wrong."

That same night at the dinner table Mr. Kendry said:

"Mr. Fanning, I'd like to have a talk with you after dinner, if you have nothing of importance on hand."

"Nothing, sir" answered Fanning, wondering at the gravity of manner shown by his host.

It was coming now. He was going to be politely requested to pack his little suit-case and leave. He had known before they started on the cruise that he was not wanted here.

He did not know why, but everything had pointed to that fact. And he had determined to go as soon as seemed the correct thing after the return.

He found Mr. Kendry in his den. He motioned him to a large armchair and held out a box of cigars.

"Fanning," the lawyer began, holding his hands so that the tips of the fingers met, "what—but wait. I am going to ask you some questions. Not through idle curiosity. I can say no more than that now. What do you know about your parents?"

The question came like a bolt from a perfectly blue sky. Of all the things Fanning might have imagined the lawyer could speak about this would have been the last.

"Why—I don't know much of anything about my parents. My mother died when

I was born, or very soon after, and I believe I was three or four years old when my father died."

"Do you know anything about your grandparents?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing. Of course, in the natural course of events, I must have had two grandfathers and two grandmothers. I never saw them or heard any one speak of them."

"You will remember, perhaps, that on the day you arrived I told you that I had followed your career."

"I do remember, and wondered that you had any time to pay attention to such small affairs as mine."

Mr. Kendry smiled.

"I was speaking of your career since Tom and you became such friends. Now I will tell you something. It was at my request that Tom invited you here."

If some one had come up behind Fanning and struck him with a sledge-hammer, if he wasn't knocked out completely he could not have been more stunned.

"You—you—I don't understand," he stammered. "Why, you had never seen me."

Mr. Kendry smiled again.

"That was why I wanted you to come here. I had a desire to see you, talk with you, study you. I can go no further on that line—now. Tell me of your childhood. Who brought you up?"

Fanning strove to collect his thoughts sufficiently to give a satisfying if brief story of his childhood. There was, after all, very little to tell.

"I lived as a boy with a man and his wife in Olean, New York. Their name was Braker. To all appearance, and so far as I knew, they were my parents. I was called Braker, known to everybody as Braker.

"These people were not rich. Braker was a shiftless sort of man without having anything vicious about him. When I say shiftless, I am not using the right word, but the best I can think of.

"He was a good man, kept a little dry goods store, and made a fair living. His wife was kind in her own way, but she had a rather quick temper that sometimes turned her into a shrew. I was kept well clothed.

"I recall, too, a peculiar circumstance or condition, I should say, that has in later years surprised me. I had a certain amount of money to spend. And I always had the best of everything to eat when, as I know now, the Brakers were hard pushed to make both ends meet.

"When I was sixteen—I had been going to school and earning nothing—they took the soul out of me almost by telling me that my name was Fanning, that I was no relation of theirs, that my parents died when I was young, that I had no relatives in the world, and that the time had come for me to go to work. I remember I cried till I had no more tears.

"I did go to work. I asked Braker to give me a job in his store. But he refused. I found work. I went to college. I left the Brakers because their manner toward me changed. I seemed not to be wanted. So I left.

"From that time you need no information. I worked, studied, chummed with Tom, graduated, and took up my present business."

"Don't you even know where you were born?"

"No, I don't even know that. The Brakers, when they told me I was a Fanning, told me no more."

"Are these Brakers alive?"

"They were a few years ago, and healthy. I have not had any relations with them in years."

"Will you keep a very still tongue if I let you into a secret that concerns yourself? I have a reason for asking you to say nothing, not even to Tom, about what I am about to tell you."

"Mr. Kendry, you may trust me with any information. My lips never give away a secret."

"Well—you—ha! It's a queer joke of fate. You were born right here in Tremont."

Fanning leaped to his feet, staring with wide open eyes at the astute lawyer, who sat calm, unperturbed, smoking his cigar.

"Mr. Kendry! Are you joking?"

"I am not joking. I told you that I had followed your career."

"Is my name Fanning?"

"Your name is Fanning. The Brakers told you the truth so far as it went. You were born in a house that is still standing, and situated on Washington Avenue. You and I will take a quiet walk when we can and I will show it to you."

"Mr. Kendry! I am whirling round!"

Mr. Kendry laughed again.

"You will whirl more, boy, before I get

through with you, if my deductions and suspicions are correct. Now that's all—for the present. You've work to do here in Tremont. Joyce will explain it to you. She is waiting for you now."

Like a man in a dream Fanning groped his way to Joyce in the drawing-room.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AN ENTICING PROSPECT.

JOYCE was sitting at a window doing nothing but wait. At the sound of Fanning's footsteps she jumped up to meet him. Then a look of consternation came over her face.

"Mr. Fanning! Are you ill? You are so white! Has anything happened?"

"No, I'm all right," he answered, trying to smile. "I will be, anyway, in half a minute."

He sat down on a divan, and in her anxiety and distress she sat down beside him, escaping, by a very narrow margin, sitting on his lap.

"But you don't *look* all right. You are white—pale as a ghost."

"How pale *is* a ghost?" he asked, recovering himself, and having an excess of spirits from reaction. "Why should a ghost be pale? They have pretty good times."

"You are hiding something from me," she said. "You *are* ill. Can't I do something for you?"

"Yes, everything. If you sit right where you are it will be a tonic."

"Well, I haven't offered to move, have I? Did papa say anything to cause you any emotion?"

"He did. Great emotion."

"Is it a secret?"

"Not at all. He told me you wanted to see me, were waiting for me. My heart could hardly stand the joy, and so—that was it, you see."

"Fibber!"

"Your father? He impressed me as being in earnest."

"You know very well I mean you. No, it was true enough that I wanted to see you, and was waiting for you. But that information did not make you totter as you walked."

"You are mistaken. I wasn't tottering. I was trying to run."

"You have associated too long with Tom. A little while longer and you will be as bad as he is. I see I can't get the truth out of you, so we may as well settle down to business."

"Business is what I live on."

She became serious at once.

"I don't suppose my father mentioned the matter on which I wished to speak to you. I asked him to leave all that to me. Now listen."

"I am listening." He was going to add something about the sweetest music, but again his natural delicacy prevented.

"For some time I have had a pet project in view," Joyce went on, "and have had some stormy times with papa and mama because of it. To begin at the beginning I must tell you that I received, as did Tom, a legacy from my grandmother—mama's mother. Tom's was not so large as mine, and was soon spent. Mine has not been touched, not even the interest. Papa gives me an allowance that is fully adequate for my needs. The interest and principal now amount to quite a large sum, and I have a use for it.

"Papa owns a piece of ground on Lamartine avenue, all rock. It is quite a valuable property, but papa has never built on it because he says he is a lawyer and not a landlord. While you and Tom were away with—Mr. Batterson, I argued and reasoned and even cried, and finally I won."

Here she paused. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes fairly shone with happiness.

Her face was close to his, she was leaning toward him, talking eagerly, rapidly, with her whole soul in her subject. He would have given the world, had he owned it, to crush her to him and kiss those red lips till they cried for mercy.

"You see," she resumed, "Tremont is no longer what it was, a settlement of homes. Apartment houses are taking the place of the old single family houses, and the population is increasing. Here is where papa and I split.

"*He* claims that as the apartment houses are new, and the apartments expensive, the natural deduction is that everybody is prosperous. That's all right as far as it goes. But you can't increase population at the rate of fifty thousand a year without increasing in proportionate ratio, the deaths, the sickness, the suffering, the number of orphans. Stick to that last word—orphans.

"There are orphan asylums. There are nurseries. All very well. I have nothing

to say about these. They do their work, and do it well. But there is not, in all the Bronx, such an institution as I want to build, and of which I want to be the head."

Fanning turned squarely to her and looked in abject amazement into that beautiful, flushed, half excited face.

She at the head of an institution! She would look more in her class leading the grand march at an inauguration ball.

"What—what sort of institution is it?" he asked.

"An industrial orphan asylum."

He pondered over this for a few minutes.

"What is an industrial orphan asylum?"

"An orphan asylum for older children where they can not only receive the usual school lessons, but learn such trades or the rudiments of such lines of life-work as they may choose to take up. Do you understand what I mean?"

"I understand, my dear young lady, that you have outlined a massive piece of work that would require millions to carry on."

"No. You don't get the idea, quite. I am not going into the matter blindly. This is to be a local institution, the benefits of which will reach within prescribed limits. Now, we have something to go on. To begin with, we have something to stand on. That's the ground."

"But you said that was your father's."

"My father never bites a cherry in two. When he consented to my plan he promised to donate the land."

"Good Lord!" breathed Fanning under his breath.

"And I have enough money to build the school-asylum."

"So, you think with an unencumbered beginning you will find enough money to carry on the work."

"I believe so. A good portion of it has been pledged."

"Have you figured the probable expenses?"

"Yes."

"And doubled your figures?"

"No, I have not done that. I have been liberal."

"Add a little more liberality and then double the whole thing. But now let's get down to brass tacks. You didn't want to ask my advice about this because I would not be able to give any, and you have already settled the matter with your father and mother."

"I want you to erect the school."

Fanning sat aghast. In the first place he had never done anything of the kind. In the second he considered the whole scheme to be absolutely preposterous and impossible.

He wished he had influence enough to reason this lovely philanthropist out of her wild notion. She was deliberately bent on ruining herself for a chimera. But the thing had been settled. He was silent.

"To-morrow," she added, "we will go look at the property. Then we will take up the plans."

"But I am not an architect," he blurted out. "I can't draw plans for such a building."

"You can talk about them, can't you?"

"Yes, I should be pleased to spend several years talking about them—with you—and let you keep your money."

"Now, please don't try to discourage me. I want you to help me, not hinder. You see, we can get the architect when we know just what we want. With you I can work as with a sympathizing friend."

He felt like bursting. It was going to be a dangerous thing, this, sitting alongside of this amazing beauty day after day simply as a sympathizing friend.

He was already in imminent danger of doing something rash. And now she put her hand on his, looked into his eyes and pleaded:

"Will you?"

"I will."

"Thank you."

It was done. The die was cast. All the work he had dug and delved, hammered and chiseled in another city could go to smash; the business upon which his entire existence depended could go hang; and why?

Because two blue eyes looked into his, a soft little hand rested on his, and two rich red lips had uttered two words—"Will you?"

He had not spoken his answer two seconds before Mr. Thomas Batterson was announced.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### SOLVING A MYSTERY BRINGS ANOTHER.

FOR obvious reasons, Fanning was in no mood to meet Batterson. He excused himself to Joyce, and started for his room.

He had no idea what he should do when

he got there, but his mind was in such a whirligig condition that he wanted to be somewhere alone to think. And yet thinking was the most difficult thing for him to do just then.

In the upper hall, well lighted by electric bulbs, he met an individual he had not seen since he entered the house. This is not remarkable, for on the morning of the day after his arrival he had gone with Batterson on the cruise.

The person who passed him swiftly in the hall was a small, slender, dark-eyed woman. She gave Fanning a quick, darting glance, and disappeared in some other portion of the house.

Fanning, wondering who she might be, went to his room. It was a large, comfortable room, with two windows looking toward the Grand Boulevard and Concourse, and these windows were open.

But somehow the room seemed small and confining. He wanted air—air to breathe, and space in which to think.

He took a fresh cigar from his own supply and went down-stairs and out on the side veranda. Here he ensconced himself in a large arm-chair and sank at once into a deep fit of study.

The first thought that dominated his perplexed brain was the query: Who was the dark-eyed woman who had given him such a queer look, and why had he not seen her before? But there were other perplexities having more weight than the mere identity of a strange woman.

He had thrown away his business prospects for a fancy. Any other man almost would have rejoiced at the opportunity, in a business sense, to have the entire contract for building the industrial orphan school planned by Joyce Kendry.

To the average man this would mean two things: big profits from this individual venture; second, a foothold in the Bronx, the most rapidly growing borough of New York.

But Fanning was not the man to figure that way. When he promised Joyce to help her he meant what he said. He would help her to the best of his ability. But not a cent would he accept for his services. If Mr. Kendry could donate to this fantastic enterprise land undoubtedly worth thousands of dollars he could devote a little time.

As to his business, he had a good foreman, and would place him in complete charge. It might be merely a prolongation of his vacation, and all would be well when he was at liberty to resume control. He dismissed this matter from his mind.

Now came the massive problem.

Why was Mr. Kendry so interested in his affairs? Having become so interested, how had he acquired the intimate knowledge of his birth, even to the very house where that event occurred?

Further, how was he to reconcile Mr. Kendry's kindly interest and Joyce's desire for his assistance, with the directly opposite desire of somebody else to get rid of him?

It seemed the correct and only reasonable thing for him to do, to go back to Mr. Kendry in his den and show him the note, and ask for an explanation.

But here, again, his own former deductions formed a formidable barrier. He had reached the conclusion that Mrs. Kendry, in her ambition for Joyce, had either written the note herself, or had caused it to be written.

Kendry was not the man to let so strange a matter go unsolved. He was just the man who would, and could, dig down to a solution. If it proved true that Mrs. Kendry had written or instigated the writing of the note, who could tell what the consequences would be?

Fanning was determined that no affair or interest of his should cause trouble in that family. So the words to Kendry were not spoken.

From this he began to ponder upon the matter of his birth. Who was his father? He had not the slightest idea where or what sort of place Washington Avenue was. There might be papers somewhere proving something in regard to him, but he had been so busy keeping his soul in his body with hard work in order to get some education into his mind that nothing concerning the matter had ever occurred to him.

A rather unsteady footstep reached him, and Tom came upon the veranda from the street, smoking a cigarette. A glance showed Fanning that his old classmate had been drinking, and rather heavily.

He had never known this of Tom. There had been some drinking on the yacht, but mostly of light wines or champagne. Whisky had been Tom's beverage this time.

Notwithstanding this, the young fellow was perfectly coherent and master of himself. He took a seat near Fanning.

"What the devil's going on with the governor?" he asked.

Fanning started a little, for he thought Tom suspected something concerning his own affair.

"Why? What do you mean?" he asked.

"As I came along the window of dad's den was open and I could hear Batterson raving and cursing like a madman."

" Batterson?"

From the veranda nothing in the den, at the other side of the house, could be heard.

"Yes, Batterson. Didn't you know he was here?"

"I was talking with Miss Kendry in the drawing-room when Batterson was announced. I had no desire to meet him just then, and came out here. No, by the way, I went up-stairs first and got a cigar. I met a woman in the upper hall I had not seen before. A smallish, dark complexioned woman."

"Oh, that's Marie, Joyce's maid. No, you might be here a week and not see her. She hasn't been here—well, not more than six months. I've only seen her twice."

Fanning was silent, thinking.

"That fellow Batterson introduced and recommended her," Tom volunteered.

Fanning gave another start. The mystery of the note was explained.

"Board," said Tom a moment later, speaking with a warmth that might have been partly the result of what he had been drinking, "there's a heavy play going on here that I can't understand. Can you?"

"My dear chap," laughed Fanning, "if you don't know what is going on in your own house, how do you expect me to know?"

"Well, there is logic in that, of course. But I tell you—do you remember that morning I told you I heard stealthy footsteps in the hall?"

"Yes, I remember."

"I did hear them, and they *were* stealthy."

"Well?"

"I heard them again last night, and they seemed to stop at Joyce's door."

At this statement Fanning was really startled. If he alone was concerned, nothing should be known about the note. If there was a plot against Joyce—it was a different matter.

"Tom," he said, taking the note from his wallet, where he had put it to prevent wear, "I have been concealing something from you. As long as it was my own affair that was all right. But if, as you say, there is anything underhand going on concerning your sister, you should know.

"The footsteps you heard that night *were* stealthy. They were the footsteps of a person who shoved this note under my door. I found it on the floor when I got out of bed, just before you came in. I had not read it then, and hid it.

"I have been wondering a good deal about it since. It seemed that I was an unwelcome guest. Then you remember, you had a private audience with your father that same morning after breakfast, and when you joined me out here you proposed a trip —the very thing that we did take in Batterson's yacht. That seemed to prove to me that what the note indicated was true, and that I was—well—not wanted here."

Tom, who sat with the still folded note in his hand, stared almost wildly at Fanning.

"Not wanted here? Not wanted *here!* Why, it was the governor himself who told me to bring you here. He wanted to know you. He had heard me—not *wanted!* Good Lord! But wait till I read this."

As he read his face grew dark, till it became almost black with rage. Then a mighty oath burst from him, which again was an unusual thing for Tom Kendry.

"She wrote this—Marie. I understand now why she was put here! As a spy on Joyce. To work in Batterson's interest. I'll kill that brute. I'll kill him as sure as there's a sun in the heavens."

"You will kill whom, my brother?" asked Joyce, who at that moment came from the house.

"That man Batterson."

Joyce stood looking keenly and sorrowfully at the brother she loved so well. She saw at once that he had been drinking, and knowing of no other cause for the outbreak felt like bursting into tears.

"Why, Tom!" was all she could say.

"You won't say 'why Tom,' when you read this."

"I protest," said Fanning quickly. "That is my property, Tom, and I won't have Miss Kendry unsettled by it."

"Your property be hanged! It is the property of the whole Kendry family. Do you know why Batterson sent that woman Marie to you, Joyce? As a spy! As an intriguer in his interest."

"Oh, Tom!"

"Read that," commanded Tom almost savagely.

With a peculiarly graceful eagerness she

took the open note from his hand. Her face blanched as she read it. She crumpled the paper in her small hand, and summoned back her calmness.

"Keep this between ourselves. I shall dismiss the woman to-morrow."

"Miss Kendry," said Fanning, in real distress, "I should be sorry if my visit should be the cause of any unpleasantness, which already seems to be the case."

"It is quite the other way. It is true that Mr. Batterson introduced the woman here, but I am under no obligation to keep her—especially now."

The angry girl stood a moment, looked at a chair as though she thought of sitting down, then turned abruptly, and without a word reentered the house, taking the note.

"There's a young lady who knows her own mind, if you please," said Tom. "I understand what that sudden turn meant. It won't be to-morrow that woman goes. It'll be to-night."

"Better so, if at all."

"Certainly. And now, Board, since we've gone so deep into these matters, we'll have it out. I saw wonder in your face on two occasions and wanted to explain things, but in each case there was a reason why I should not.

"You spoke of that interview with my father that morning, after which I proposed a trip—in a motor-boat, wasn't it? Now, I wouldn't mention this to embarrass you, if you hadn't suggested that you were not wanted here.

"You already know that it was my father who told me to invite you here. Well, he took me to his den and asked me how I stood financially. You know how I always did stand, pretty nearly broke. Well, the good old dad hauls out a thousand and hands it to me to blow in while you were here. *That* looks as if you were not wanted, I don't think.

"I haven't had a chance to break a five-dollar bill yet, and Batterson has done all the entertaining. But I can understand that attack in the launch now. That fellow wasn't crazy. He was merely stupid, and bungled his job."

"I begin to think so myself," Fanning replied, "but things don't piece up very well. Why should the woman warn me, if Batterson meant to put me out of the way? I was no rival to him with your sister. I hadn't been in the house twenty-four hours."

"Well, each was playing a lone game, and I don't understand that either."

"When Batterson came after us to take that cruise he had no time to learn whether I had received the warning, or whether, having received it, I would go."

Tom mused over this complex problem a moment. His brain had not been muddled by his drinking.

He suddenly sprang to his feet.

"Fanning!"

His old classmate looked at him with surprise. There was a flashing light in Tom's eyes that he did not like.

"What is the matter, Tom?"

"Fanning, that note has nothing to do with the bungling attempt on your life. Marie warned you to go, to get you out of the way, in Batterson's interest. It would have suited her purpose if you had merely packed your duds and left the house. But Batterson had a stronger reason for wanting you out of the way.

"Don't you remember that day we came, after dinner, was it—I don't know just when it was—but you said you had seen Batterson somewhere? And under conditions that were—well, you couldn't recall?"

"His face is vaguely familiar."

"He hates you, and you are in his way."

Fanning sat like a stone man. Putting Tom's theory and Mr. Kendry's disclosure together the potentialities of the case were beyond his power of deduction.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FANNING TO THE FRONT.

TOM resumed his seat and calmed himself with a cigarette. Fanning, after sitting with a numb brain for a moment, laughed.

"There are queer things in this world, Tom."

"Yes. And I've just thought of another. I told you I had seen a look of wonder on your face twice. I have explained one. The other was upon the same morning.

"You remember that when Batterson arrived I was not pleased. When he invited us on the cruise I was actually displeased. I had a thousand dollars good currency of the realm in my pocket and I wanted to do the honors. The money was given me to spend, and you know whether I am reluctant to spend money.

"To tell you the truth, I was jealous.

Jealous that a man I disliked as I did Batterson should take the job off my hands. But you made the decision, and accepted his invitation."

"I had that note in my pocket and wanted to know if Batterson really intended to harm me," Fanning explained.

"Well, you came blamed near finding out. Now you remember, we went up stairs, leaving Batterson here. Joyce was working in the dining room, and in the short time we were up there Batterson managed to find her, proposed for the fiftieth time, and that time got a flat, final rejection.

"You remember his mood. Well, when I went to bid mother and Joyce good-by I found mother scolding like the mischief and Joyce in tears. That was why I looked so glum when I rejoined you."

"But why should you feel glum about it when you disliked Batterson?"

"Oh, I was glad enough about the rejection. But it always makes me glum when there is the least clash between Joyce and either father or mother. *I* can stand it. Many a good old rating I've had, and deserved. But Joyce—good Lord, Boardman, I'll never love a wife as I love my sister."

"She is—"

Fanning brought himself to a halt.

"Well, a goddess, princess? You said that once."

"I was going to say that your sister is well worth loving."

"You bet she is. And it wasn't because she had refused Batterson, exactly, that my mother was scolding. You know, or you did know in college, that I received a legacy from my grandmother."

"I believe I helped eat some good things bought with some of it."

"Well, Joyce received more. And while I blew mine in, Joyce never touched hers. And she has a scheme for building some sort of crazy school for poor orphans in which they can be taught to be self-supporting and upstanding, instead of going into the world ill fitted to fight their way."

Fanning moved uneasily. In his own vigorous language, in his denunciation of Joyce's scheme, Tom had uttered a stronger argument in its favor than Joyce herself, in her sweet voice.

"I know all about that scheme," said Fanning.

"Well, what mother was scolding about was this: She thought that Joyce had chucked away a good offer of marriage just for the purpose of carrying out that scheme. See the point?"

"I see several points. While I know nothing about the reasons your sister had for refusing to marry Batterson, I do know that the scheme is going to be carried through."

"Has she won out?"

"She has not only won out, but your father donates for the site of the orphan-school his property on Lamartine Avenue."

Tom opened his mouth and gasped like a dying fish.

"Are you sure?"

"Well, Miss Kendry told me so, and I presume you accept her statement."

"Of course. Well, if she can't beat the devil around a stump, I don't know. Got the good old dad to hand over twenty thousand dollars' worth of rock! Shoo fly, don't bother me!"

"What I was wondering about was where do you come in?"

"Don't worry about that. We don't cut each other's throats in this family. If I've got any prospective share in that property Joyce is welcome to it. Oh, but that's rich.

"But look here, that puts a big job up to the girl. Father is too busy to do much, and I'm about as useful as a sick duck. Who is going to look out for Joyce's interests? Who's going to see that she doesn't get cheated out of her eye teeth? She's no fool, but she's no business woman. Who's going to stand by like the watchdog of the treasury and see that she is not robbed?"

"I am. She has placed the entire job in my hands. No one will cheat your sister."

"Glory be! Is the world coming to an end? Batterson to the rear, Fanning to the front! Thank God!"

"That'll be about enough of that. This is merely a matter of business between Miss Joyce Kendry and Boardman Fanning."

"Miss Joyce of the Bronx, and Fanning of Albany."

"Fanning of the Bronx for a time. I shall leave Michaelson in charge of my business."

"Gee whiz, and it's a matter of business. No sentiment about it at all. No sentiment in a girl blowing in a big inheritance on a school for impecunious orphans, no sentiment in a man leaving a young and growing business in order to look out for her interests, no sentiment anywhere. No, of course not."

"Mr. Kendry shows as much sentiment as anybody, and you could scarcely call your father a sentimental man."

"No, hardly. Aside from his love for his family James Kendry is about as sentimental as a load of brick."

There seemed to be some words between two persons, in angry tones, at the front of the house. Tom went to the end of the veranda, and beckoned Fanning to join him.

Marie was taking her departure, as Tom had foretold. And she was going in no gentle mood. The door had closed, and the lady's maid was talking to it.

"This house will rue this day!" she said, shaking her fist at the imperturbable portal. "I'll show you!"

With this she marched off, down the short walk to the gate, and in the direction of Burnside Avenue. But she did not go far alone. Even before Tom and Fanning had turned away Batterson flung himself from the door with a face in which the blackest fury was so clearly expressed as to startle the two beholders.

He was muttering curses as he went, almost hurling himself along, and they saw him overtake Marie. They stood a moment in short converse, and then went on together.

"There go the enemy," said Tom. "Let us have peace."

But, had he known it, this was but the beginning of war, as it is when an ambassador leaves the country to which he is accredited.

When the two young men returned to their seats they found Mr. Kendry there waiting in the doorway.

"Fanning, come to my room a moment, will you?"

His voice was firm, and had a peculiar metallic ring to it that made both young men look at him closely. His face was whiter than usual, but otherwise he was normally calm.

Fanning followed him. Inside his den Mr. Kendry shut the door.

"Sit down," he said curtly.

"Fanning," he began, plunging into his subject like a boy diving, "circumstances have taken such a turn that, instead of proceeding in a decent, leisurely way, along perfectly smooth lines, I am compelled, or at least impelled, to begin action at once. You must remain here now, whatever decision you and Joyce may have reached. To-morrow I shall begin action in the supreme court in your behalf. I presume that you have no objection to me as your counsel."

"My counsel?" repeated Fanning stupidly. "Why, I had no idea that I needed any counsel, Mr. Kendry. But if there is any reason why I do need one, there is not, in all the world, a man I would prefer to you."

"Thank you. Now let me tell you a little story. About two years ago—it wasn't two years ago, for it was in the winter, Joyce attended an entertainment and dance at the armory of the Second Battery, Second Field Artillery, on Franklin Avenue. There she met Batterson. He asked permission to call. He did call. He fell in love, or seemed to fall in love, with Joyce.

"Batterson seemed a gentleman. He is well educated, carries himself well—when not enraged, as he was when he just left me—and is a good looking man.

"He came to me and asked permission to pay court to Joyce. In these days a father is lucky if he knows beforehand that his daughter is going to be married, and especially lucky if he gets an invitation to the wedding. This old-fashioned nicety on the part of Batterson drew me toward him. I consented. He was rich, very rich.

"I don't wish to convey to you the idea that his wealth had anything to do with my consent. But human nature is human nature, and any parent, be it father or mother, is always pleased when a daughter marries well financially, if all other considerations be acceptable.

"He began to pay his court at once. Joyce rather liked him from the start. But even then she had this orphan business on her mind and did not care about marriage. She is obsessed with this idea.

"Well, even so, it began to look as if the two would make a go of it, and I wanted to know something of my future son-in-law. I began looking up his record. Personally, he has been as clean in conduct as most men, or had so covered his bad acts that they remained hidden. But in looking up the record of his birth, and his parents, and the title he had to his wealth, I was astonished to find that he had no title at all."

Fanning began to tremble, for he had a premonition of what was coming. He had already been told that he was born in Tremont.

"I don't want to make this story long,"

continued Mr. Kendry, "for it will all come out in court. I have sent a man to Olean to interview the Brakers, and if necessary, to summons them here.

"Mrs. Braker was your mother's nurse. But I am getting ahead of the horse I'm driving. I found that Lemuel Batterson, the father of Thomas Batterson, was your grandfather's man—handy man, or valet, whatever you wish to call it, and your grandfather, Samuel Fanning, owned, and lived in, the house on Throggs Neck, now supposed to be owned and actually occupied by Thomas Batterson—our Batterson, himself.

"Now, I did not propose to permit my daughter to marry into a false position. Of course I did not know then that Samuel Fanning was your grandfather. You never came to my mind at all. Even the fact that I had heard Tom speak of you did not bring you to my mind. I set capable investigators at work.

"Well, the valet got the old man's money, by some hook or crook, which we shall thresh out in court. The money that supported you till you were sixteen was paid by Thomas Batterson's father. He died when you were sixteen, and Thomas would not continue the payments, and the Brakers cast you off."

"Then—then it was Batterson's *father* whose face I dimly remembered!" exclaimed Fanning.

"My investigators finally reached the point where they declared that the true heir to Samuel Fanning's estate was Boardman Fanning, grandson, who was brought up by Mr. and Mrs. Braker of Olean. I knew every word you told me to-night six months ago. I wanted to know if you did.

"The case is clear, and the papers lack but one thing, the agreement made between the Brakers and Lemuel Batterson for your keep. This I shall have in a few days. Now you need keep the secret no longer, for I shall begin proceedings to-morrow."

Fanning could say nothing.

"When I learned," Mr. Kendry went on, "that the heir was my son's old classmate and very good friend, I had you investigated, and was so pleased with what I found out that I resolved to restore to you what had been taken from you by fraud. There are several parcels of real estate, the one on Throggs Neck, some unimproved property in Fordham, the house in Washington Avenue where you were born, a building on McKinley Square, and a large personal estate. Also a big office building in Manhattan.

"Samuel Fanning, your grandfather, was a large importer of silk. He was also a thrifty man, and a wise investor. All the result of his labor and investment was wrested from your father, who was not a business man, and did not look out for his rights. He died, anyway, before Samuel, his father, and in some way you were proven dead to the old man.

"That's the story, crudely and briefly stated, but it will be a long and complete story told before a supreme court judge. I have absolutely no fear of losing, so congratulate you in advance, as your counsel."

He took Fanning's hand. It was limp, cold, moist. Fanning tried to say thank you, but did not know what he said.

Flashing like a meteor across his vision went a recurrence of his dream on the deck of the Sapphire — now, very evidently, a possibility.

## CHAPTER IX.

### SHORT AND ALMOST PEREMPTORY.

THE amazement caused by the repetition to the other members of the family of Mr. Kendry's revelations may well be imagined and need not be recorded here. Really, except for the fact that since Batterson was good as dead from that day to all of them, and Fanning was a present friend, the matter of an exchange of fortunes made little difference.

They congratulated Fanning, and expressed some regrets for Batterson. All but Tom.

"Serves him right," he said. "Now it's all explained. I told you that fellow in the launch wasn't crazy."

"But he was an awful bungler," remarked Fanning.

"Bully good thing for you he was. You, at the bottom of Long Island Sound, wouldn't amount to much as your grandfather's heir."

Joyce's comment was brief and shyly given.

"I hope it will come out all right, for your sake," she said.

Mrs. Kendry held up her hands and exclaimed:

"That shows how little we know," which observation might apply to the canals in

Mars as well as to the forthcoming case of Fanning vs. Batterson, in the supreme court.

But all this did not keep anybody awake that night. Nor did it prevent, on the very next day, two heads coming in close proximity, to look at some photographs of buildings that were in use at the present time for purposes closely approaching Joyce's ideal.

"The first thing," said Fanning, "is to determine upon the size of the structure and the accommodations you are going to require."

"*We* are going to require."

Fanning looked at her quickly, and she flushed to her gold-brown hair. Her face bent lower over the pictures then.

Fanning could have kicked himself for causing her embarrassment by that swift glance. But there had been nothing wrong in it. It merely suggested that her remark sounded as though they were planning a home for themselves instead of a lot of children whose parents were dead.

She jumped up suddenly.

"No," she said. "The first thing is to establish your responsibility in the business. Get your hat and come for a walk."

If outwardly he seemed to obey meekly, there was little meekness in his heart as he left the house side by side with the most beautiful girl he had ever spoken three words to, and to him the most beautiful girl in the world.

There are at the present time several million most beautiful girls in the world, but only one for Fanning. But then, since he had returned from the yachting trip, and Batterson had been refused, Fanning's world was very limited.

She led him down a hill and across the bridge over the New York and Harlem Railroad, to the corner of Tremont Avenue and Park.

"This is the Bronx Borough Bank," she said, although a blind man could read the same words in more than one place. "I have an account here, and I shall transfer to your name enough for you to draw on whenever wou wish, without coming to me."

"Oh, but I protest! I shall not have one dollar of your money put in my name."

"But you will! You are putting up my building, are you not?"

"I have done work for a good many people in the two years I have been in business, but I never had anybody transfer his bank account to me." Fanning laughed at her pouting lips. "No, you must draw your own checks."

"Let us reason together here in public, but don't let us come to blows. Be reasonable, do. You promised to help me, and not hinder. Now, remember this. You will be in charge of the work. I shall not. I have social duties, church duties, home duties. Suppose you are—how do they say it—on the job. And somebody comes with some stuff you want. You want to draw a check. Do you want to go chasing around after me?"

Fanning grinned.

"You poor little chicken. I am not in the habit of handing checks to the teamsters who deliver flagstones, brick, mortar or iron. These things are done by mail. We will establish an office in your father's den, permitting him, in the kindness of our hearts, to occupy it when he is at home and not in bed. And we will read and answer our correspondence there."

"That doesn't suit me at all. I may go to the mountains or the Jersey coast for a time this summer. What then?"

"Oh, there won't be any lawsuits over the money we owe while you are away."

"But your sal—commission must be paid."

"I am not in the habit of working on salary or commission. When I finish a job I get my money in a lump."

"And when this job is finished you will take your pay in a lump?"

He looked at her quizzically.

"If I can."

"You come in here. You'll do as I say or it's all off."

"But why do you insist?"

"Because a man dealing with men ought to deal *as* a man, and not be running to a girl for money to buy a pound of nails. Come along."

He saw that she was determined to have her way, and he had learned by this time that she was accustomed to having it. He followed her, this time meekly inside and out.

The transaction was soon accomplished, and Fanning walked out with more thousands absolutely to his own credit than he had made in his two years of hard work.

What a magnificent opportunity for a dishonest man! What marvelous trust in a woman's heart!

They went from the bank to Lamartine Avenue.

"There are the lots," she said.

Fanning stood aghast, looking at the face of a solid wall of rock twelve feet high. In the laying out and grading of the avenue the city had cut through a mass of rock for the proper level, and Mr. Kendry's lots were decidedly up in the air.

"Great Joss!" he groaned. "Have you any idea what it will cost to take out that rock to the necessary depth?"

"Oh, I suppose it will cost something. But won't the stone, used for the foundations, pay the cost?"

Fanning shook his head.

"I have heard people talk in their sleep about such things, but I've never known it to work out right."

"Well, but you see, we get the land for nothing."

"By Jove, Miss Kendry, you are the greatest optimist I ever met."

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## CHAPTER X.

### A POLICE MATTER.

A GREAT fortune had changed hands. The sun rose and set with the usual regularity. No disturbance of the revolutions of the earth on its axis had occurred. Except that two lives were reversed no change in the general trend of events had been brought about.

This was not done in a day, nor a week. This narrative cannot enter upon a detailed account of the tremendous battle in the supreme court between James Kendry on one side for Boardman Fanning, and a formidable battery of legal talent on the other fighting to preserve for Thomas Batterson wealth to which he had no title.

It would be tedious to write, and more so to read, of the daily strife as it appears in the records of the court. The countless motions, denials and exceptions. The mass of testimony from witnesses Kendry had dug up from Heaven knows where.

And yet the case was interesting inasmuch as it was not a case of a forged will, but one of fraud and intimidation and substitution, all covering a period of years. It was not by one transaction alone that Batterson's father became possessed of the fortune that should have been Fanning's. But the evidence was conclusive.

The Brakers had been haled from Olean, and, terrified by the dignity and austere atmosphere of a supreme court-room, unfolded testimony that was absolutely incontrovertible.

James Kendry won his case. There were two reasons for this. He had a strong case, with right on his side, and he had worked with his investigators, silently, diligently, like a mole underground, until he was ready to begin the battle with weapons that were invincible.

Batterson was brushed away as one might brush a spider from a table, crushed, broken, with nothing left, not even manhood. For that which passed for manhood when backed by unlimited wealth disappeared with the loss of it, and Batterson disappeared also.

Fanning was placed in possession of what to him was a fabulous fortune, yet he remained the same Boardman Fanning he had been before.

With this difference—he disposed of his business to his foreman on terms very advantageous to the latter, became a citizen of the Bronx, and threw himself into Joyce's project with nothing else to occupy his mind—except Joyce herself—and with money to back the enterprise.

He bade the Kendrys good-by as a permanent guest and took up his residence in the mansion on Throggs Neck, discharging all Batterson's servants as untrustworthy, and installed the necessary number of his own.

There were ten and one-half acres of land with the mansion, and Fanning was determined to hold it as a home until the irresistible march of city improvements should drive him out. By that time his land would be more than trebled in value.

And this change of residence made it much easier for him to go on with the work he had undertaken for Joyce.

Contracts were signed and the massive rock that looked so formidable to Fanning at first glance began to take on an appearance of activity that was destined to end in its final demolition.

Drills appeared and were set in place. A steam boiler, with pipes for water and pipes for steam, decorated the landscape. The magazine for the safe keeping of dynamite was set in place, and the wagon with the red flag and its two guards carrying the required explosive arrived on the scene.

The block in which the rocky property was situated became lined with laborers looking for work. There being no vexatious delays for the purpose of negotiating

loans, the excavating contractor had instructions to put on as many as possible, and thus expedite the business. It is astonishing what a difference ready money makes.

But all was not bright blue sky, even with all this smoothness of weather. Tom had lost his position at Albany through some political deal in which he took too much interest on the wrong side, and, not being willing to remain idle, and there being just then no other opening for a position that suited the gentleman's taste, he went to work for Fanning as time-keeper and personal representative "on the job."

He received a good salary, and had altogether too little to do. Time was a thing that always proved dangerous to Tom.

But the work went on apace. The constant chug-chug of the steam drills, each with its man perched on his little seat like a great bird on a barren stump, was heard from morning till night, except for the noon hour, and on Sundays.

Fanning and Joyce were frequently on the spot, and Fanning enjoyed explaining to his fair companion each step of the work.

This all caused much comment in Tremont. The romance of the change of fortune enjoyed by Fanning, the connection between that fortune and a charitable institution planned by a mere girl, giving the scheme substantial backing presumably without the aid of outside contributions, called forth congratulations not only verbally from Joyce's friends, but in the columns of the Bronx newspapers.

But it must not be supposed that Fanning and Joyce Kendry devoted all their time to the building of the orphan asylum. The Sapphire was now Fanning's, and although the summer had about passed by the time the transfers were all made, Fanning was loath to put up the yacht for the winter without some consummation of his dream. Joyce and her mother, and sometimes Mr. Kendry and a few friends, sailed the Sound even in the chilly autumn air. The yacht was heated, but Joyce, well wrapped in furs, would remain on deck in the teeth of a biting wind.

Mrs. Kendry preferred the luxury of the warm and elegant after deckhouse, with its cushions, its victrola and the current magazines.

One morning Mr. Kendry got out of bed, plunged into his bath, took his usual short morning exercise, and proceeded, in a happy, contented frame of mind, to dress. Having accomplished this important factor in daily life, he reached out to take his watch from the little silver hook on which he hung it on his dresser every night, and grasped empty air.

He clapped his hand to his vest pocket, wondering if he had forgotten to take it out the night before. But his watch was not in his vest pocket, nor in any other pocket.

"My dear," he said to his wife, "I miss my watch. I believe I hung it up as usual last night."

"You did," exclaimed Mrs. Kendry, sitting suddenly upright in bed. "I saw you."

"Then—where—"

But with a woman's fears, more easily aroused than a man's, Mrs. Kendry took a flying leap, leaving a wreck of bed covering on the floor, and in night-robe, and with bare feet, snatched open a drawer.

"James," she cried hysterically, "we've been robbed! My jewel case is gone."

"Robbed? Impossible," replied Mr. Kendry. "Why, that would be an impossibility."

"I tell you, James, we have been robbed. I put my bar pin and watch and two of my large rings in that case last night. The case is gone. Gone, do you hear? We must notify the police at once."

Now, James Kendry had a horror of any such proceeding as notifying the police. The inevitable visitation by two detectives, the interminable questioning, the publicity, all with a problematical chance of recovering the stolen property, made him feel ill.

He sat down and stared gloomily at his wife.

"The police?" he repeated vacantly.

"Who else? You don't send for a doctor, minister, or undertaker when you are robbed. You send for the police."

Astute lawyer, strong politician, strong man as he was, Kendry flinched from the ordeal he knew this would entail.

But while they were in this condition of mental chaos Joyce burst into the room.

"We've been robbed," she cried. "My jewel case is gone."

"Well, I suppose it'll have to be the police now," groaned the lawyer.

"Why—did you know about it?" asked Joyce.

"Yes," answered her mother. "Your father's watch is gone, and *my* jewel case, too. And your father objects to notifying the police."

"Oh, no, my dear. I didn't exactly object," remonstrated Mr. Kendry. "Only—"

"James Kendry, you did. You sat there and stared like an owl, and said 'The police?' just like that."

"That was not an objection, my dear. That was a breather."

"Well, you may take all the breathers you wish," said the practical Joyce. "Mama, you hurry and get dressed. I'm going to the police-station right now."

"But why not telephone?" suggested Mrs. Kendry. "It will save so much time."

"I will," and Joyce started with her light, quick step, for the stairs.

Mr. Kendry moaned, not over the loss of the jewelry, for with the exception of a watch, which has a certain usefulness for some people, he cared little for things made of gold except dollars, half eagles, and eagles, and none at all for diamonds and rubies. But the coming visits of the police stirred his internal economy to rebellion.

He followed Joyce down-stairs. His lagging gait brought him to the main hall just as Joyce had thrown aside the telephone directory and taken the receiver from the hook. He heard her say "Tremont, One, Three, o, o."

Then—

"Is this police headquarters for Bronx? Is this the 65th Precinct, on Bathgate Avenue?"

Then, in a moment—

"This is James Kendry's house, Edgewood Terrace and Grand Concourse—Kendry, yes—James Kendry, Edgewood Terrace and Grand Concourse—the house has been robbed during the night—jewelry—yes, quite valuable—two jewel-cases and Mr. Kendry's watch—yes, Mrs. Kendry's jewels—I am Miss Kendry—yes, my own too—oh—I didn't know—oh, will you—thank you ever so much—yes—any time—thank you—good-by.

"That's done," she said, as she hung up the receiver.

"But," said Mr. Kendry, "you have notified the police-station. You should also notify the detective bureau, 462 E. 158th street."

"The desk lieutenant said that he would attend to that," replied Joyce, with the air of one who had had to do with the police department all her life.

"Oh, Lord," groaned Mr. Kendry, as he went to his den to wait till his wife came down for breakfast.

Joyce then telephoned to Fanning, in his mansion on Throggs Neck, what had happened.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A GREATER MYSTERY THAN THE THEFT.

BEHOLD what it means to be a man of wealth and political prominence and honor in your own community! Within an hour after Joyce had telephoned to the police-station there were in the house the inspector in command of the 7th Inspection District, the captain of the 65th Precinct, the head of the Bronx Detective Bureau, two detectives and a policeman in uniform.

Of course Fanning was there, but he was merely a lay figure. Mr. Kendry remarked to Joyce that if she would now kindly call out the fire department, and notify the board of health, and ring for an ambulance from Fordham Hospital they might, in the dim and misty future, learn something of their lost jewelry.

But there was no sarcasm, and no nonsense about the men whom Joyce's message had summoned to investigate the mystery of the robbery. The inspector took immediate charge.

"When did you first discover that the jewelry was missing?" he asked Mr. Kendry.

"When I had finished dressing. It is my habit to hang my watch, every night, upon a silver hook screwed into my dresser. I don't know why, but it is a habit. I went to take it from the hook. It was not there. I spoke to my wife, and she discovered that her jewel-case was missing. Then my daughter announced that her jewel-case was also missing."

"Have you any suspicion, any idea as to the identity of the thief?"

"Absolutely none."

"Have you made an examination of the house? How did the thief, or thieves, effect an entrance?"

"Well, I made a casual examination. There were no locks forced."

"Do you sleep with your windows open?"

"Always, winter and summer."

"Second-story business. Now, have you any suspicion, or is it possible, that one of your servants might have done this?"

"No, that is not to be thought of for a moment. We have not so many but what we can account for them. We have two

maids, one up-stairs, one down, and a cook. They have been with us a long time, and have had many opportunities to take jewelry without running any risk. A servant who steals watches for an opportunity, but does not make one. That is, a servant would not enter a bedroom that was occupied, when she has access to it at all other times."

"That's reasonable. Now, who besides you, your wife and your daughter, were in the house last night?"

"My son, who lives here."

"Did he lose anything?"

Mr. Kendry smiled.

"He has nothing to lose. I believe he has a silver watch not worth stealing."

"What did he have to say this morning concerning the robbery? Where is he now?"

"At work. I have not seen him this morning. He works as time-keeper for Mr. Fanning here, and has his breakfast and is off before the rest of us are up."

At this all the police officers looked sharply at Fanning. The case of Fanning vs. Batterson was too recent to have been forgotten, and they all knew that this was the Fanning for whom Mr. Kendry had battled in the supreme court and won.

"Have you a list of the articles stolen?"

"One can easily be made. Joyce, you attend to that. Make a complete list."

"And," added the inspector, "place after each article the name of the jeweler from whom it was purchased."

"A great deal of it came from Wartell's, on Trement Avenue," said Joyce.

"And give as good a description of each article as you can."

"I will. Shall I do that now?"

"As soon as possible."

Joyce and her mother got together, and were amazed to find how little they knew about their own jewelry.

"That lavaliere of mine," said Mrs. Kendry. "I paid Wartell five hundred dollars for that. For the life of me I can't describe it. I know it has sixteen diamonds and a pearl pendant."

"But how are the diamonds arranged? And is the pearl round or pear shaped?"

"Pear shaped, but a little flat on the side that hangs toward the person."

"That ought to be a valuable assisting factor in identification."

"The pearl can easily be detached."

"Yes, that's true."

The police cohorts withdrew, and Mr. Kendry breathed again.

Fanning, who had not opened his mouth during the inquiries, now got up and walked to and fro nervously.

"It struck me that you answered the inspector's questions very grudgingly," he said. "Why were you so reluctant to give the police what aid you could?"

"No, I wasn't really reluctant," answered Mr. Kendry. "But I see no hope of recovering the jewelry. I have known so many cases where nothing came of these investigations."

"I have read of them," said Fanning, with a trace of acidity in his voice, "and have always believed that in many cases information that would have helped the police had been withheld."

The acerbity of Fanning's remark was due to his interest in Joyce. It was all very well for Mr. Kendry to lose his watch with perfect equanimity if he wished, and to show indifference in the matter of his wife's loss.

But he had no right, in Fanning's prejudiced eyes, to permit the theft of Joyce's jewel-case to pass without the most rigid investigation, the keenest police work that could be procured, and, if necessary, the offer of a substantial reward for any information that might lead to the recovery of the jewels and the arrest of the thief.

Kendry's indifference to the loss, which in money value he knew ran far into the thousands, so astonished Fanning that he could not help gazing at the lawyer curiously.

To his astonishment Mr. Kendry was ghastly pale.

Here, then, was a conundrum. A man cares little for the fact that a thief enters his house and steals a valuable lot of jewelry. He almost refuses his aid to the police, who show every indication of zeal and an eagerness to discover the thief and return the stolen booty.

And yet he sat there, white and trembling, as Fanning could see. It was queer to say the least.

Suddenly Kendry turned his white face to Fanning.

"Have you been to Lamartine Avenue this morning?"

"No. I came here direct from Throggs Neck in my car. It is outside now."

"Then you don't know—"

Mr. Kendry stopped and seemed to bite

his lip. Then he threw his arms upon the table near which he sat and bowed his head upon them with a groan of anguish.

Fanning stopped in his walk and stood looking down at the fine head, so leonine in its pride and strength when in the supreme court-room, and wondered, and wondered, and wondered.

Stepping to the side of the man who had in so unexpected and marvelous a manner befriended him, Fanning, now worth many times what Kendry was, touched him on the shoulder.

"Kind friend, best friend of all my life," he said gently, "you are troubled greatly. There is a reason for your lack of action that I cannot understand. You have been my friend, now let me be yours. To the utmost limit of my ability, of my purse, command me."

Mr. Kendry leaped from his chair with a swiftness that startled Fanning, and seized the younger man's hand.

"Oh, Fanning," he cried, and Fanning knew that the man's heart was sore, "I have never asked gratitude of any person in my life. Many have I hauled successfully through a case in court without a fee. Many have I placed in good political situations. But never have I asked in return a single act or word, or even thought, of gratitude.

"I am going to do it now. If, my dear fellow, you feel that I have done anything for you, if you feel that I have been your friend, do something for me now. Stop this thing. Let it go no further, in the name of God I ask you."

Paralyzed beyond power to reply, Fanning stood staring at the man, still holding his hand, when Joyce, dressed for the road, entered the room with a paper.

"Here is the list, Boardman; your car is outside. Will you drive me down to the detective bureau?"

"No, no, no," came the pleading voice of Mr. Kendry. "I will give you all the jewelry that you have lost. I will replace it doubly. But let not this thing go on."

Joyce glanced at her father and then stood, petrified, looking with terror-stricken eyes straight into Fanning's puzzled ones.

"Father," she said at last, recovering some power of motion and going to him, "what does this mean? What is the matter? Are you ill?"

"Yes, yes," he answered hoarsely. "I am —very ill."

He sank weak and almost helpless into his chair.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE FINAL LINK.

JOYCE turned pale with alarm, and was about to rush to the telephone to call up their family physician, when Mrs. Kendry entered the room.

"What is the matter? What has happened?" she asked sharply.

"Papa has been taken ill," answered Joyce. "Shall I telephone?"

"No," said Mr. Kendry promptly and in a strong voice. "I will be all right presently. I will be all right presently if—if—" He looked at Fanning and ended lamely—"you know."

Mrs. Kendry, small and frail though she seemed, now developed that strength that seems latent in all women who have some one they love to give needed care.

"Go on," she said to Joyce. "Get your business over. I will take care of father."

Fanning, catching Joyce's eye, signified that he wanted her, and she followed him, not out of the front door to his car, but out at the side door to the veranda. There she turned swiftly to him.

"What is this horror that has come upon us just at this time? Is my father really very ill? Did you quarrel? You know more about such things than I do. Is this the beginning of paralysis? Or some forewarning of apoplexy or any other hideous thing?"

"Please sit down, Joyce," he said.

She obeyed. He took a chair also, drawing it close to her side.

"Sitting down does not answer me," she told him. "What is the matter with my father?"

Fanning sat still, looking at the open door of the Kendry garage, through which Joyce's red car could be seen.

He did not know what to answer. As a matter of fact he was as much in the dark as she was. Mr. Kendry's actions were inexplicable.

"He said you know what would make him all right again," persisted the girl.

"Yes," Fanning breathed, "he said that."

"What did he mean?"

Fanning turned his gaze from the garage door to her face.

"Joyce, I hardly know myself. There

is something of terrible import on your father's mind."

"But there was nothing serious on his mind last evening. And even this morning when we discovered that he had been robbed he took it coolly. He did not want the police. But my father is a lawyer, a politician. Why he *makes* policemen. Why should he fear them?"

"It seemed to come on when the officers all left," explained Fanning. "I spoke rather bruskly, I fear, about his failure to give the police any assistance or encouragement. Of course, he could do little more than answer the questions they asked, and he did that. But the inspector was annoyed. I could see that, and so probably could you.

"Well, my mind was on your loss. I felt that your father owed it to you to do everything in his power to recover your jewelry and capture the thief. Perhaps I spoke too harshly—yet it was not what I said that affected your father, for he showed great anguish. He spoke to me as a strong man never speaks unless his heart is almost breaking."

"I saw you with his hand in yours. There was no evidence that he was angry at you. Tell me just what he said. Perhaps I can put two and two together."

'Well, he said that he had done many things for many people, and never asked for gratitude in return. But, he added, if I thought I owed him any, he would ask it. And the way for me to show it would be to forestall any further investigation in the matter of the robbery. Not to let you take down the list. There must be some strong reason."

She did not look at Fanning while he was speaking, but he was talking at her cheek, and as he continued that cheek turned toward him kept growing whiter and whiter.

"Is that all? All?" she asked when he stopped.

"That's all so far as the robbery is concerned. The only other conversation we had was his question whether I had been to Lamartine Avenue this morning, and my answer was that I had not."

"When you said that you had not been to Lamartine Avenue did he make any comment?"

Her question struck Fanning with force and caused him to peer more closely into her face. She was weeping.

"He did begin a sentence. He said, 'Then you do not know—' That's as far as he got."

"Oh, merciful Heaven!" burst from the girl. "Has it come to that?"

"Joyce, is there anything wrong—wrong, I mean besides the robbery. Of course, I do not wish to thrust myself into your affairs. Yet, I am pretty deep in them as it is. I told your father I would stand his friend, but you don't need to be told that. Is there anything I can do, Joyce?"

"N-no, not—now, at least. But—we will do as papa wishes."

With a cold deliberation she tore the list of stolen articles across, put the two halves together and tore again, and so continued till the paper was in atoms, which she flung to the winds.

Then a blinding flash of the truth came to Fanning. He leaped to his feet and paced to and fro on the veranda, his heels making a tremendous noise in his angry tread.

"It is not so!" he said, almost vociferously. "I tell you the suspicion is preposterous. I won't believe it, and I won't let you believe it. Why, you might just as well suspect me. Oh, what a damnable thing this is!"

She looked up at him with eyes that were welling with tears, and a smile drove the sadness from her face. She reached out a hand, which he grasped in his. She drew him down to his chair again.

"True friend!" was all she said.

And so they sat without a word for ten minutes, when Mrs. Kendry joined them.

"Your father recovered sufficiently to go to his office, Joyce," said the little woman. "I made him take some brandy, and you know he detests it. Well, it is better medicine for those who detest it than for those who like it. But now I am so upset by his illness that I almost forget we have been robbed. Are you going to the detective bureau with the list?"

"N-not yet. When we go out we'll drop in there."

"I am surprised that the loss of any amount of jewelry, however large, should cause your father so much mental agony," Mrs. Kendry went on. "He was most terribly shaken."

"Yes," said Joyce in a low voice. "I don't think papa is really well. We must doctor him up."

Mrs. Kendry returned inside the house, too nervous herself to remain quiet in any one place long.

Joyce, who had snatched her hand away from Fanning's when her mother appeared, now laid it upon his again, and leaning toward him, said:

"Then if you repudiate that—that thought—so forcibly, how do *you* account for the robbery?"

"How do we account for any robbery? There always have been people who stole, and there always will be people who will steal—at least until the millennium, and if the signs of the times are any indication that's a long way off."

"But you are accustomed to quiet and deep thinking. Does not something occur to you?"

Fanning remembered the scene when Marie, Joyce's dismissed maid, stood railing at the closed front door. But he answered:

"The form of your question leads to the inference that something occurs to *you*."

"Something does, and I pray God that it is so. There is Marie, the maid I dismissed for writing that letter to you."

Fanning started, so exactly did her spoken thought tally with his suppressed one.

"But then," the girl continued, "they called it a second-story job. Did you ever hear of a woman second-story thief?"

"There is no particular reason why she could not be such if she chose."

"Her skirts would hamper her."

"She could borrow her little brother's clothes."

Joyce laughed, slightly.

"I'd have trouble wearing my little brother's clothes. I'd be in worse trouble than in my own."

"Then there's Batterson."

"Batterson—a thief!" She looked at him almost frightened. "Oh, no!"

"For revenge?"

"Ah-h-h-h!"

The long, softly breathed word was her only answer.

Then suddenly she laughed.

"It is really mama who loses most. Papa's watch was given him by his Masonic lodge, and all of my stuff was given me. Mama did really pay good money for some of hers."

Mrs. Kendry returned.

"Here is something Tom must be missing to-day," said the simple hearted mother. "One of the gold cuff links I gave him last Christmas. I found it on the floor at the foot of my bureau. Strange, that it should be in our room. You give it to him when you go to Lamartine Avenue, Joyce."

She handed the cuff link to her daughter and went back into the house, a loving, innocent mother.

Joyce sat with the cuff link in her hand staring at Fanning, with two burning coals glaring from a face of chalk.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A SHATTERED THEORY.

FANNING got up suddenly from his chair.

"We are accomplishing nothing here," he said quickly, and bending to lift Joyce up by the elbow. "We might sit here and stare at each other till we grew stiff in our chairs. Get on your hat and driving-coat. We will see if Tom has missed his cuff-link."

Joyce looked up into his face with her own expressing hope, but pleading for more.

"Do you still—believe—" she faltered.

"My opinion is not a weather vane to be blown toward all points by every little puff. It will require more than a cuff-link out of place to alter my belief."

"Thank you, oh, thank you," she said in a low voice, placing her hand on his arm. "You are strong in your convictions."

"Yes," he answered shortly. "Go get on your duds."

But it was with a heart filled with pain and sorrow that Joyce obeyed.

In her own room, rearranging her hair for the fur turban she wore now when automobiling, she missed the encouragement of Fanning's cool strength, and tears again came to her eyes as she murmured: "My brother! My own dear brother—a thief!"

But when she joined Fanning at the curb and he helped her into the seat beside his own her spirits rose again.

The day was cold, but clear. The air was bracing. It was like a tonic after what she had been through. By the time they reached the "job" in Lamartine Avenue her cheeks were full of roses and her eyes were bright.

The work had by this time begun to show results. In one place the rock had been taken out far below the surface of the ground. In another the land remained on the level of the curb and a wagon track ran to the rear of the premises.

Here and there great mounds of cut

stone showed the energy with which the rock excavation was being carried on. But this was by no means near completion.

The boiler was in operation, the furnace in full blast and the noise of a score of drills was almost deafening. The incessant chiseling of the faces of the building blocks, and the discordant shouts of the laborers added to the din.

Most of these stone cutters were Italian. Joyce had often stood watching them, remarking upon the precision of their cutting. Particularly had she spoken of the danger of a misstroke when a blast threw out a piece too large to be made into a single block and too small for a dynamite charge.

Then one man would sit holding a hand drill and another, sometimes two, would wield great sledge-hammers on the drill while the man holding it kept it twirling in the ever deepening hole.

"One miss and two arms would be broken," she said to Fanning.

"Yes, and then somebody's head," he had answered.

They stopped the car a hundred feet from the work and walked up to it. Fanning looked around for Tom, but did not see him. The sub-contractor who was doing the drilling came to him.

"Where is Kendry? Has he been here this morning?"

"Mr. Kendry? Oh, yes, sir. He was here early, I think. He was here when I got here, anyway, and I wasn't late."

"Where is he now?"

The man looked around him, climbed on a large piece of rock and swept the place with his gaze. But Fanning saw a shade of trouble on his dark, weather-beaten face.

"He must be around somewhere," he said, speaking with a decided accent. "I saw him one minute ago."

Fanning knew he lied. Yet he did not doubt that Tom had been there earlier in the morning.

Two blocks away from the job there was a built up block, and on the corner a saloon. Fanning's gaze roved thither.

"Never mind," he said. "There is really nothing to keep him here at this time of day."

Nor, had he told the truth, at any other. The position Fanning had given Tom as timekeeper was merely an ornamental one to afford the slightly younger man pocket money without asking his father for it. Each portion of the work was contracted for. The contractor was responsible for the arrival and departure of his own men.

Tom's record, when he turned it over to Fanning, was promptly thrown into the waste basket unread, for it was useless. Fanning was paying Tom's salary out of his own pocket, not from Joyce's funds. And the money was being squandered.

Of course, Tom paid no board at home. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Kendry would ever have thought of accepting it, and it goes without saying that Tom never thought of offering any. He never had any to offer.

But Fanning, now that he was no longer an inmate of Mr. Kendry's house, had no idea of the rapid decline in habits of his old class-mate. Joyce knew, but shrank from making known to Fanning things she was sure would pain him and shame Tom, and even, in a sense, herself.

Thus she accounted for the stronger faith that Fanning held where her own was weak.

While they stood there, neither saying much in the awkwardness of the situation, they saw Tom come from the corner saloon, rather unsteady on his legs, and start toward the job.

Fanning could hear Joyce breathing hard, every breath being almost a moan. His own jaw set. It was painful, it was tough, he told himself, to see his bright, merry-hearted old chum going to the devil so fast.

Tom came ambling down Lamartine Avenue, sometimes on the inner, and sometimes on the outer edge of the sidewalk. When he reached the corner nearest to where Fanning and Joyce were standing he saw them, and, wheeling on his heel, marched up a side street with the clear purpose of avoiding them.

Joyce uttered a little cry of pain, and, darting from Fanning's side, leaped over steam pipes and fallen pieces of rock and sped in pursuit. Fanning would have called her back, but knew how fruitless would have been the effort, and, instead, watched admiringly the swiftness and grace with which she ran.

When she rounded the corner both she and Tom were hidden by the elevated ground, and Fanning climbed to the top. He saw her overtake her brother, and lay a loving hand on his shoulder.

Whatever was said Fanning could not hear. But it was little. Tom instantly turned and accompanied Joyce to where Fanning, again down on the sidewalk, stood waiting.

"Hello, Fanning," greeted Tom, not without some hiccoughing, and looking a little shamefaced. "Had to get something to take the stone dust out of my throat."

"I didn't know that you were a stone-cutter," replied Fanning.

"No, but I stand over these fellows and see that they do their work."

Fanning regarded him gravely. He knew this was a falsehood, for any outsider who stands over a stone-cutter working for a contractor and attempts to tell him how to do his work will soon know enough to go about his own business.

Fanning wanted to get Joyce away. And his mind was revolving another problem—what to do with Tom.

This job was no good for him. How he had become addicted to excessive drinking in so short a time was a mystery to the stronger willed Fanning. And Fanning knew that to leave him there, day after day, practically idle, with plenty of pocket money, was going to ruin him beyond repair.

Something else must be decided upon. But what?

Tom was no easy chap to manage in a matter of that kind. He had what he thought was adamantine firmness of character, which, analyzed, amounted to stubbornness in small things.

Fanning knew that if he tried to send Tom away on the Sapphire, to Florida, to the Bermudas, which he was perfectly willing to do, Tom would resent the offer. And then it was doubtful if the experiment would be a success. Tom could always get spending money from his doting mother.

While Fanning was thinking these things quickly Joyce was even more wrought up over something else.

She had, nestling in the palm of her hand, inside her glove, the cuff link. She shrank from giving it to Tom in his present condition. But if she did not, there would be the necessity of explaining to her mother why she had not.

To tell the true reason would be impossible. It would be absurd to say that she forgot, for it was an established, indisputable fact in the house that Joyce never forgot anything.

She took the gold link from her glove.

"Here is your cuff link, Tom," she said. "Did you miss it this morning?"

Her voice was tremulous. Fanning noticed her emotion, but Tom, oblivious of the fact that his sister's eyes were rapidly filling and the shower must soon fall, took the link and grinned.

"Should say I did! Why, I ransacked my room half an hour looking for the thing. Where did *you* find it?"

"Mama found it."

"Oh, I'm always dropping them. You see, the buttonholes in the cuffs of my new shirts are too large. One end comes out and then the other. I wish you'd sew them up smaller, Joyce."

"I will, Tom," answered his sister, half choking.

Fanning was looking at the man with a feeling of admiration that was mingled with dismay. Evidently he had missed but the one link.

Fanning had been nursing a theory that the thief had been in Tom's room and stolen both his cuff links, and dropped one while rifling the bureau drawer in Mrs. Kendry's room. This happy theory was shattered now, for Tom showed one gold link in his right shirt sleeve and a white enamel one in the left.

He took this out and replaced it with the one Joyce had restored to him.

Then he looked Fanning straight in the eyes and said:

"I heard that again about one o'clock. You know what I mean."

Fanning nodded and felt a queer sensation. He knew that Tom meant mysterious footsteps in the house.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE TRUTH, OR GOOD ACTING?

"KNOCK off for to-day and come with Joyce and me for a ride," said Fanning abruptly.

Tom looked uneasy.

"Can't leave these fellows all alone so long," he said.

"Come, Tom. We want to talk to you. Something very serious has happened."

Tom turned to Joyce with a quick, nervous movement.

"Anything the matter? Anybody sick? What has happened?"

"We can't talk here. Let's go where we can sit down and talk. I'm tired standing in this wind."

"Very well," replied Tom.

He was coherent enough now. His quick intuition had warned him that these two

were criticizing his condition with sharp eyes.

They all walked to the waiting automobile, and Tom got into the rear seat with Joyce. This was Fanning's own arrangement, and it cost him something to lose Joyce as a seat-mate. But he wanted to do what was best under the circumstances.

"Where shall we go?" he asked, turning to his passengers.

"We are your guests," Joyce answered, giving him a smile that repaid him for the sacrifice he had made in having her sit with Tom.

"Then, may I suggest?"

"You may command, best of friends."

"Then I propose this. We will stop at the house—your house—and tell your mother that you will not be home for lunch. It is almost noon now. From your house I will telephone to mine and tell Benson that we will have lunch there. After lunch, if the weather is kind, we will take a short trip in the Sapphire. Then we might as well make a day and a night of it, and we will get home in time to dress, have dinner at the Bronx Park Casino, and go to Fox's Theater."

"Oh, you glorious man," cried Joyce, while Tom contented himself with saying "Bully!"

But Joyce had seen in this plan something that had escaped Tom. At her home it would be Fanning who left the automobile to notify Mrs. Kendry, because he wished to use the telephone. The drive to the mansion on Throggs Neck would do much to get the fumes of liquor from Tom's brain. The lunch and the sail in the cold, salty air would do more. The return, the bath, the change to evening clothes would put him on his feet.

The evening at vaudeville would take his mind from the desire to drink, and keep him from whoever had of late become his associates. He would go home and to bed perfectly straight.

And at no time would he be out of their sight, and at no time while he showed the effect of drinking would his mother see him. To Joyce the scheme was delectable.

Fanning put it at once into operation. Arriving at the house he got out and went to the door. Then before he rang the bell he returned.

"Suppose," he said, "we make it a party of four for dinner and the theater. I'll call up Kitty Delmour."

"Oh, do! Thank you," said Joyce.

"Yes, by all means ask Kitty," laughed Tom, who had begun to feel more like himself. "When I get money enough I'm going to ask Kitty to marry me."

Kitty Delmour was a girl a little younger than Tom, and a little older than Joyce. Of a sweet disposition and pretty, she was an addition of value to any party.

Fanning went back to the door, and rang the bell. A maid answered it and Fanning disappeared inside. He was there about ten minutes. Then he came out, made a sort of hurrah gesture with his right hand, jumped to his seat, touched the self-starter, and they were off.

"All right all around?" asked Joyce, leaning over his shoulder.

"Yep, your mother is lying down with a headache, and no wonder. I left word. And Kitty accepts."

"And *that's* no wonder," said Joyce. "The poor girl doesn't get much of the frivolous side of life."

Benson had the table ready and everything ready to put on it. It was not an elaborate luncheon but a very good one, and much cheerful chatter seasoned it. And during all this not a word had been said to Tom about the robbery.

Fanning and Joyce had entered into no agreement, but the same thought had struck both, that the time to speak of that and of the peculiarity of his cuff-link being in his mother's room, was on board the Sapphire.

In the after deckhouse, warm and light and luxurious, with good cigars for Tom and Fanning, and whatever Joyce wished for herself from the yacht's well stocked larder, away from everybody, away from the world, almost, they could talk without fear of interruption, and under such conditions people speak from the heart.

The Sapphire was anchored off shore, north of Locust Point. At Fanning's boat-landing there was a launch, and the three were soon on board.

It did not take long to get the yacht under way, and they stood on deck until she had passed between Belden Point, on City Island, and Stepping Stone Light.

By the time they had left Hart Island behind they were in the luxurious deck saloon and a small colored boy in white duck stood ready to obey commands.

Fanning sent him to his own stateroom telling him what to get. He brought a box of cigars and another of very fine bonbons.

"Oh, you excellent man!" exclaimed Joyce. "Do you keep the Sapphire prepared to receive ladies?"

"A lady." He smiled.

Tom lolled on cushions and puffed at his cigar, satisfaction incarnate.

"Tom," began Joyce abruptly, "did you know that we were robbed last night?"

"Robbed!" Tom sat bolt upright as though he had received an electric shock.

"Mama's jewel-case, with, of course, all her jewelry, mine, with all of mine, except such rings as we always keep on, and papa's watch."

"Robbed!" Tom repeated this half stupidly with the appearance of not being able to comprehend.

Then he slapped his knee.

"I knew it was going to come."

"How did you know it was going to come, Tom?"

"Fanning will tell you that the first night we were home I heard sneaky footsteps in the upper hall. Very well. They were accounted for by the note Marie shoved under his door.

"The night we came back from our cruise with Batterson in this yacht I heard the same stealthy footsteps, and that time they stopped at your bedroom door. *Last* night I came home late—it was about 1 o'clock. I'd been—I went to my room as softly as possible. The moon was shining in my window and I didn't turn on any light. I had light enough to undress by.

"Well, I wasn't in any hurry. I sat down at the window and smoked a cigarette. Suddenly I heard a footstep—a pussy-foot. I knew it was none of ours. I had off my coat, and as I was I went on a still hunt. I was tired of hearing unaccountable footsteps.

"I went into every room. I went into your room. I went into the sanctuary—father's and mother's you know, Board. But whoever it was must have gone. I suppose they were in the house when I came home."

"It was close to the bureau in that room that mama found your cuff-link," said Joyce.

"Shouldn't wonder. Wonder is it didn't drop in the street. But to the devil with the cuff-link. No wonder the dear mother is in bed with a headache. Did you notify the police?"

"Yes, and the chief police officials of the Bronx were in the house."

"What did they say?"

"They expressed no opinion, except that it looked like a second story job. They asked questions."

Tom's eyes were shining. He was evidently laboring under great excitement.

"Asked questions!" he exclaimed. "Any blamed fool can ask questions! I could answer their questions! Batterson and Marie, and I'll bet my life on it. I've got to kill that man. There's no escape from it, sooner or later I've got to kill Batterson. You find Batterson and Marie—what's her last name?"

"Nicasse. Marie Nicasse."

"You find Batterson and Marie Nicasse and you'll find your jewelry or the pawn tickets they got for it."

Joyce was very white. Fanning studied Tom's face with keen eyes and understanding mind. But, after all, he asked himself:

"Is this the truth, or good acting? We have learned nothing here."

## CHAPTER XV.

### A PEACEFUL INTERLUDE.

ONE result of Fanning's plans for the day had escaped Joyce's grateful calculation. Tom was not at home to meet his father at dinner.

Had the young man been present and witnessed the return from a trying day in court of the stalwart fighter, he would have been amazed.

The broad shoulders seemed bent as though some hitherto unknown weight had been put upon them. Furrows had made their appearance during the day that caused Mr. Kendry to seem ten years older than he had looked the day before. There was a weary expression in his eyes that was almost a stranger to the household.

Mrs. Kendry, still suffering from her headache, but knowing that the dinner party had been planned, struggled with the malady and so far overcame it that her husband did not eat alone.

She strove to hide from him her own misery, seeing so much of his. And yet she had no conception of the reason for it.

"Where is Joyce? Where is Tom?" asked Mr. Kendry, as the two parents took their places at the table.

"I have not seen Tom to-day, and have not seen Joyce since this morning. Just after you left she and Mr. Fanning went

away in his car. They went to Lamartine Avenue, for I gave Joyce Tom's cuff-link to carry to him. Then—"

"Tom's cuff-link? What about Tom's cuff-link?" asked Mr. Kendry sharply.

"Why, you know the gold cuff-links I gave him at Christmas. He seemed to set such great store by them—never would wear any other. Well, strangely enough I found one of them in our room, down by the bureau this morn—what's the matter, James? Are you ill? You are as white as snow."

"I am tired. The day has been a hard one," answered the lawyer.

Undoubtedly this was true. Even had his legal work been light the load of misery he carried in his heart would have made the day a bitter one.

"Well, I was explaining about Tom and Joyce. Mr. Fanning, it seems, gave Tom a holiday."

"A—hol-i-day? That's good. Very good," said Mr. Kendry.

"James! What *is* the matter with you to-night? I think it was very kind of Mr. Fanning."

"It was," Mr. Kendry assented. To himself he added "to me."

"They came here, and Mr. Fanning left word—I was lying down—that they were going to Throggs Neck for lunch, then for a sail, then they were to dine out, and go to Fox's in the evening. Kitty Delmour is with them."

Mr. Kendry looked across the table at his wife.

"Is there anything between Tom and Kitty Delmour?" he asked.

"Well, I don't know. I like Kitty. She is bright and sensible, and, being her mother's housekeeper, would know how to manage a small house or apartment without servants. And I don't fancy that Tom will employ many servants—ever. You can scarcely expect to turn up another fortune and make *him* rich."

Perhaps it was her struggle with her headache that made her speak in that manner.

"Great Heaven!" ejaculated Mr. Kendry, his own nerves none too steady. "It can't be possible that you are jealous of Fanning's good luck!"

"No, oh, no! of course not! Especially as he thinks a lot of Joyce."

"I hope she appreciates it. There's a man! I'd rather have her marry Boardman Fanning with nothing but what he could make digging cellars and laying sidewalks than a man like Batterson, with millions."

Mrs. Kendry pursed her lips and remained silent. She was in no mood or condition for a controversy, but this view was hardly hers, although she liked Fanning and recognized his sterling worth.

Dinner over, husband and wife talked a little while in a desultory way, and then she returned to her couch. Mr. Kendry shut himself in his den with a cigar and his thoughts—bitter, bitter thoughts, indeed.

"My son—my only son," he groaned, and tears were in the strong man's eyes as he fell into a fit of sombre musing.

Meanwhile, the son was enjoying himself hugely. Kitty Delmour was in her brightest spirits. The music at the Casino seemed better than usual.

And how Tom and Kitty did enjoy the show that came later! Kitty, knowing nothing of the troubles that weighed upon the minds of Fanning and Joyce, laughed at every joke and applauded every act till her throat ached from laughing and she split her gloves.

After that nothing would do but some oysters, and Tom knew the best place, so they gave themselves up to his guidance. He got them into a trolley car and made them ride a mile and then get off and enter a dingy little restaurant the proprietor of which he knew, and who had on several occasions accommodated him with a small loan. Here they ate oysters not a whit better than could be found within three minutes' walk of the theatre in a cleaner, better lighted place, and served better—half a dozen places, at least.

But nobody cared; they were trying to be happy for that night in their own way, and Fanning, who could, if he chose, have been enjoying himself in any of the gilded palaces in Manhattan, lent himself to the occasion, and did all he could to enhance the pleasure of his guests.

Of them all, perhaps Kitty Delmour was the only one whose happiness did not contain some alloy. But then, as Joyce had said, she saw little of this lighter side of life.

But the day and night had this result: Kitty went to bed full of joy, which alone would have repaid Fanning had he known. Tom went to bed sober, without his mother or father knowing that he had been any-

thing else all day. Fanning went to bed on Throggs Neck, filled with a wonderment about Tom, and Joyce went to bed with Fanning in her heart.

It was, summing it all up, quite an achievement for one day and evening.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE THOUSAND DOLLAR DEBT.

FANNING'S mansion was a large wooden one, built in so-called Colonial style, and had two wide verandas.

The house contained a good many more rooms than Fanning needed, but, speaking as a yacht owner, he kept them all "in commission."

Benson was the major domo of the establishment, and Benson was a jewel whatever his title. Nothing escaped his eagle eye.

He was obedient without being servile. He could praise a thing that Fanning did or said without appearing sycophantic. Fanning liked him and trusted him.

The land was partly wooded and part was garden, and two acres immediately around the house were smooth velvety lawn in the summer. Batterson had not permitted the place to go to ruin.

It was a fine estate, a pleasant home, and Fanning would have been happy in it had there not been one sting to spoil, in some measure, his ownership. In order to obtain it he had been compelled to send another man down to poverty.

Not that he or Mr. Kendry had done anything wrong in this. The whole estate had been wrested from his grandfather by fraud, and it had been no more than right that it should be restored to him, the rightful heir.

But the decision of the court, in Fanning's estimation, had been too sweeping. It divested Batterson of everything. As one lawyer on Batterson's side had expressed it, "It was God's mercy that left the man a shirt to his back."

Now, while Fanning wanted his own, there was nothing sordid nor grasping in his nature. He would have left Batterson something.

He would have offered him enough to keep the wolf from the door as long as he lived. But immediately after the trial there was no Batterson. Not even his own attorneys knew whither he had gone.

On the morning after what Tom called their "little jamboree," Fanning went in his car as usual to call at the Kendry house to see if Joyce wished to visit the job on Lamartine Avenue. Sometimes she went, sometimes not. This morning she said:

"I shall not go to-day. Mama is quite ill, worrying over the jewelry. This morning a detective was here to get a list of the stolen articles so that the police can search the pawnshops. It seems there is a law, which I did not know, that pawnbrokers must report to the police certain classes of pledges left with them.

"The detective and papa had quite a long talk about the business. One suggestion was that mama and I go to headquarters and examine the reports each day as they come in. Imagine mama! Another was that mama and I accompany two detectives around the city and visit the pawnshops and examine the pledges. Think of *that*."

"It shows zeal, at least, but I doubt if either suggestion came from headquarters."

"My idea exactly. Why do you think so."

"Anybody with skill enough to get into this house and walk out with two jewel-cases filled with valuable articles, and a gold watch, would have brains enough to ship the stuff to a pal in some other city for disposal."

"The detective spoke of that. Oh, he was shrewd enough. He said the police were in a hurry for the list so that they could send out to all large cities a general alarm and description of the 'goods.'"

"That sounds more like headquarters."

"Papa hedged a lot, and backed and filled, and hemmed and hawed. I don't know what to do. I have been thinking a lot about Tom's story—the one he told on the Sapphire yesterday. What did *you* think of it?"

"Like you, I have done a lot of thinking with no result. I don't like to lose faith in Tom. He has been like a brother to me for so many years. When I was a poor devil in college, sometimes going hungry, he seemed to divine it by some miraculous power, and there would be a supper or dinner for three or four, always including me. I don't like to—oh, hang it, I *won't* believe he's guilty."

She smiled up into his face and said:

"How I thank you, Boardman."

"Where's Tom this morning?"

"Oh, I guess he went on the job. He was gone when I got up. But I want to tell you something, Boardman; you must know the truth. Tom has been gambling. I found a letter—come to the den, and I will show it you."

She shut the door of the den, and handed him a letter she took from the bosom of her dress.

"Read that," she said, with a tremor in her voice. "I found it in Tom's bureau drawer. It is three days old."

Fanning took the letter from its envelope and read:

> MR. TOM KENDRY:
>
> I'll thank you to pay me that thousand dollars you owe me for a month past. It ain't no fun playing with a kid that's broke all the time. I know your old man's got plenty money and if your sister can build a orphan asylum she can help you out. Or ask the big guy what won out against Batterson. He's got barrels.
>
> A. G.

"Isn't that a literary gem?" asked Joyce.

"It is. The fellow was wise enough not to sign his name, and all the king's horses could never haul it out of Tom."

"But does that alter your opinion? That's the main thing."

"Well, to tell you the truth, Joyce, it rather jolts it. But it wasn't necessary to steal ten thousand dollars' worth to pay one."

"But then, ten thousand dollars' worth of jewelry doesn't represent ten thousand dollars in a pawnshop."

"That's so, little wise one. Now look here. Put that letter back where it came from, and watch for more. If any more come for Tom in that handwriting don't be squeamish, but steam the envelope and read it. If another dunning letter comes Tom didn't steal anything and hasn't anything with which to pay. If no more come, we'll try to find out who A. G. is and creep along till we get at the truth."

"All right, I will do as you say, Boardman."

"I'm off. I want to see two people today and told them to meet me at the job."

"Then go to the job, my dear boy, and take my blessing with you."

"I'll take more than your blessing with me some day, my lady, you may gamble on that."

"Boardman! If it wasn't you I'd be angry at that speech."

"If it wasn't you I wouldn't make it. Listen, I propose, as soon as the roof is on the job, that we get married. That won't be for some time, so you have fair warning. Then we'll board the Sapphire and hike to the Caribbean Sea."

"But Boardman! You—you haven't asked me if I'll marry you! You haven't asked papa's consent! You haven't done *anything!*"

"Oh, yes I have. I've fallen head over heels in love with you, and that's enough. I don't propose to ask foolish questions of anybody. So now you know. I'll take this to let you remember."

He drew her to him, kissed her lips, and strode like a conquering Roman out of the house. He left her with a face the color of peonies, and a heart that was making desperate efforts to smash through her ribs. But, as had been the case in some other recent episodes, there were no tears in her bright blue eyes.

He drove to Lamartine Avenue and found Tom Kendry on the job, with no sign of liquor upon him. A great flood of thankfulness welled up in Fanning.

"Hello, Tom, how do you feel this morning?"

"Fine and dandy," was the prompt answer in Tom's old style. "Takes a doctor like you to put nerve in a man."

"Glad you enjoyed the day. We all did, I guess."

"Yes, and most of all Kitty. Say, Board, I want a bit of serious talk. I was late this morning, and ran against dad as I came out. I was struck by some strange and sudden change in him. You see more of him than I do of late. Is the good old dad sick?"

"No real illness, I think. I fancy he is worried."

"About money? Is money tight?"

"No. Do you want the truth?"

"Shoot, old man. I know *you* won't tell me anything wrong."

"He is worried about you. Of late you have not been the old Tom. You drink too much, and I have reason to believe you gamble. I have felt sad, very sad. Your mother knows nothing about this, but you are breaking your sister's heart. Have you stopped to think?"

"I have, Boardman. I have realized what a fool I was making of myself. Yesterday morning settled it. I saw the way you and Joyce looked at me. Well, I'm sober now, and please God I'll stay sober.

Never again will I drink whisky. As for the gambling, I'm done with that too. I don't know how you found it out, but I'm done. I ask no questions."

"Do you break off free?"

"Free as air. I did owe some money, but I've paid it, and now me for the straight and narrow."

Fanning looked at him with deep, grave eyes. He would have preferred to hear the fellow say that he was a thousand dollars in debt.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE SKULKER.

AFTER a hard and somewhat trying day Fanning returned to Throggs Neck about six o'clock for dinner. He had not seen Joyce since their conversation and consummation kiss in the morning.

He longed to be with her, longed to look again into her bright blue eyes, and wanted to see the flush mount to her cheeks once more when he spoke peremptorily of his plans for both of them. Yet there was a reason, too, why he did not want to see her.

He felt depressed, sad, despondent.

He had no doubt that Joyce loved him. Every look, every little action, every accent, proved it. He knew that Mr. Kendry already looked upon him almost as a son. What had the lawyer not done for him?

He knew, too, intuitively, that he would be acceptable to Mrs. Kendry as a husband for Joyce. Whether she was distinctly pleased with his personality or not, she was a woman and a mother. Given a man of clean record, good education, and a fortune, what mother could raise objections?

Tom he was sure of, but Tom's consent was a negligible feature.

But with all the easy running that he felt sure he had before him in the matter of his love, he did not go back to the Kendry house, because he dared not face Joyce with the load of misery Tom had given him to carry.

Benson, who was prompt, always, had the "boss's" dinner ready. But, before sitting down in his solitary state, Fanning telephoned to ask after Mrs. Kendry's headache.

Joyce answered. Her mother was better, but Mr. Kendry had come home feeling ill. Joyce ended her communication thus:

"Please, Boardman, don't come to the house to-night. We are so upset here that I could not be with you much and—"

"Yes, Joyce, and what?"

"There is so much for you and me to say when next we meet."

"Well, I will see you in the morning, Joyce. Just say one word for me to sleep on and we will let it go at that."

"Relative to what, Boardman?"

"Our final conversation this morning."

"Oh! You—well, YES, then. Can you sleep now?"

"Happily, with pleasant dreams. Good-by, Joyce."

"Good-by."

So, all weariness disappeared while he ate his lonely dinner, and he looked about the great dining-room, with its wide, high windows looking toward Eastchester Bay, and thought what a difference there would be when Joyce, his peerless Joyce, sat opposite him at the table.

Having eaten, Fanning sat down with a cigar and a magazine he had bought at a stand on the way home. But reading was impossible. His mind was divided between happiness and its contrary emotion. He threw aside the magazine, smoked only half the cigar, and stretched himself upon a broad lounge to think. But the recumbent position made him drowsy, and sleep overcame him gradually.

It was midnight when he awoke. All the household was asleep.

Fanning had no valet. Such personal attendance as he needed was provided by Benson. But a man like Fanning needs little done for him.

He was wide awake. He had slept soundly for at least four hours, and going to bed was now out of the question. He chose a fresh cigar, a mild one, and, slapping his automobile cap on his head, stepped outside. A white moon had risen and rode so high that it seemed to hang directly over Manhasset Bay.

With his cigar alight, Fanning started for a stroll along his shore front. He began first to congratulate himself upon his approaching happiness. But, as every rose has its thorn, so there can hardly be happiness without some sting. His thoughts switched from Joyce to Tom.

What was to be done? What *could* be done?

Tom's statement that he had paid his gambling debts amounted, in Fanning's mind, to an admission of guilt. Fanning

knew that every dollar Tom received as a fictitious timekeeper was spent as soon as received, if not hypothecated before.

He had no other resources without applying to his father, mother, or sister. It seemed to be indubitable that Tom had stolen the two jewel-cases and his father's watch. In no other way could Fanning imagine how he could raise a thousand dollars.

The night view of the Sound was perfect. The tops of the ripples that disturbed the water were silvered by the moon. There was a mild wind blowing from the south that so tempered the autumn chill as to make out of doors comfortable without an overcoat.

Fanning stood on a rise of land that broke the slope from the mansion to the shore and surveyed his little domain.

"All this for Joyce, my Joyce," he murmured.

Suddenly his keen eyes caught a glimpse of a man darting in the half light among the trees from the shelter of one large bole to another closer to him.

For a moment he was startled, for at that hour no man could be skulking on his grounds for any good purpose.

But fear was a thing Fanning had never learned. He was unarmed, and naturally knew that any man who skulked at midnight on private property must be well provided with weapons of some sort.

For a moment he was on the point of hailing. He did not, realizing that this would either drive the intruder away or bring a shot from ambush, if his own murder was the stranger's purpose.

He remained on the knoll, apparently oblivious of the man's presence.

Then, flicking the ash from his half-consumed cigar, he sauntered casually and easily in the direction of the tree behind which he had seen the fellow take shelter.

A new thought struck him with force. Perhaps, leaving Tom out of it, this was the same robber who had entered the Kendrys' house, and now his own was the object of attack.

He smiled at the idea. There was no jewelry there to steal. There was little silver plate. He wore a plain gold seal ring and a gold watch worth fifty dollars. They were not in the mansion, but on his person.

There was no one behind the tree when he reached it, but about a hundred feet from him, at a spot where the white moon sent shafts of light down through the now leafless trees, he saw a darting figure.

His fighting blood surged to his brain and he ran.

The skulking figure ran, too. Fanning was a good sprinter. He had won more than one long-distance foot race, and for dashes he held half a dozen medals.

The appearance of the fugitive was weird as he dashed, now through a bar of brilliant silver light, then into shadow, emerging again into light, and again covered by shadow. And Fanning was gaining on him all the time.

The question rose in Fanning's mind, why didn't the fellow shoot, or stand to fight, if he had come to do mischief? Then suddenly the quarry tripped and fell and Fanning pounced on him like a hawk.

"What do you want here?" demanded the owner of the place.

"Don't! You hurt! You are strangling me, Board!" came a gasping screech.

Fanning yanked his captive out into the moonlight, took a broadbrimmed hat off his head, and swore.

"Tom! What the devil does this mean? What are you doing here at this hour? Is this the performance of an honest man?"

"Yes, yes, I swear in God's name it is," said Tom Kendry. "I'll explain. Take your blamed thumb off my windpipe."

"Come into the house," commanded Fanning. "I rather think you *will* explain, old chap."

And, not too gently, Fanning propelled his old college mate toward the mansion.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### BETWEEN MIDNIGHT AND DAWN.

BACK into the great old-fashioned dining room Fanning hustled his unexpected visitor, and, hurling him into a chair, turned on all the lights. He stood looking down with a sternness that boded ill to evildoers upon the slighter figure of Kendry, who had grown white under his rough handling.

"What do you use to develop your muscle?" growled Tom, rubbing his throat. The white mark, surrounded by a red ring, showed where Fanning's thumb had pressed. "Do you exercise with yacht anchors and building stone? Gee whiz! I thought I was a goner."

"You would have been if you hadn't spoken and I hadn't recognized your voice."

"But I say, that isn't the way to treat a fellow who is doing you a big favor."

Fanning threw himself on the lounge sidewise, and rested his head on his hand upheld by his elbow.

"So! You were doing me a favor! I'm sure my gratitude may be great without being excessive. When, will you tell me, has skulking at midnight among a man's trees been regarded as a favor?"

"I was looking for Batterson."

"You were — looking for Batterson! Come, now, Tom, don't expect me to swallow any such stuff as that. Did you expect to find Batterson hanging like a fir cone in one of my trees? Or did you think perhaps I had him in a jewel-case in my bureau-drawer."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Tom savagely, leaping to his feet. "What do you mean, Fanning?"

Kendry's face was white with anger, and his fists were clenched. Fanning did not move from his comfortable recumbent position.

"Sit down, you fool. Haven't you had enough? Do you feel like fighting me?"

"What did you mean by that reference to a jewel-case in a bureau-drawer?"

"I asked a question which you failed to answer."

Fanning's eyes were glittering like cold, polished steel.

"How can I answer an insult when I don't know what you mean by it?"

"If you don't know what I mean, how do you know that it was an insult? Sit down. You and I are going to have a nice little talk right here and I want the truth if it takes till daylight to get it. What were you doing among my trees at midnight?"

"I told you I was looking for Batterson."

"And I tell you that you are a liar."

"Hang you, Fanning," cried Tom, "I'm telling the truth."

"Sit down. If you come one step nearer me with your fists clenched I'll get up and wallop you till you can't stand on your feet at all. Now—sit down!"

The command was too peremptory, the glare from those angry eyes too steady, and the muscles of the man who owned the eyes too much like steel for Tom to disobey. He sank back into his chair.

"Now," said Fanning, sitting up, "I don't want any more lies. I'm going to ask you some questions. There are ways in this little Borough of the Bronx to find out whether a man tells the truth or not. I am not the greenhorn in New York that I was the day you and I landed here from Albany. First, I want to know who the person is who signs his initials 'A. G.'?"

Tom started violently.

"Confound you! You've been rifling *my* bureau-drawer."

"I haven't been in your room since I took up my residence here. But I know that you owe, or did owe, a person called A. G. one thousand dollars, and that he wanted the money."

"Then Joyce stole the letter."

"Be careful how you speak of my future wife if you don't want to get your head punched."

"Since when!" blurted Tom, opening his eyes wide.

"Never *you* mind. It is something that concerns you not at all, something you can neither help along nor hinder. What about this 'A. G.'?"

"He's been paid."

"A thousand dollars?"

"Yes, a thousand dollars in good United States currency."

"Where did you get the thousand?"

"That's none of *your* business. That's something *you* can neither help nor hinder."

"Tom," Fanning spoke in a low, sad and pleading voice now, "did you take that jewelry out of the house?"

"In the name of God!" Tom leaped to his feet again. "Have you gone insane? Are you accusing me of robbing my own father and mother and sister?"

"Sit down," thundered Fanning. "Don't threaten me if you don't want a sore head. I am intimating that circumstances point very strongly to you as the very person who did that very thing."

"Fanning!"

"That's my name, and that is becoming my opinion. Unless you can give a better account of yourself than you have thus far done it *will* be my opinion."

"Boardman!"

"That's my name, too. The constant repetition of it gets us nowhere. Now sit down and explain away my suspicion if you can?"

"Why don't you telephone to the Westchester police-station and have me locked up for attempting to rob *your* house? Why

don't you denounce me to the detective bureau on 158th Street as the scoundrel who robbed the three people he loves best in all the world?"

"I may," said Fanning dryly, as he motioned toward the chair. "It all depends on what you say in the next half hour, and how susceptible of proof your statements prove to be."

Tom sat down. A great sob surged up through his chest and throat. He lurched sideways, threw his arm on Fanning's dining-room table, and laid his head, face down, upon them.

"Fanning," he moaned, now thoroughly subdued and broken, "man that I love next to my father, do you think this thing of me?"

The boyish cry, the youthfulness of the supine head, the tousled hair, moved Fanning strangely. Again he remembered the days when he was a poor, struggling student, working summers that he might go to college winters, and Tom one of the favored few who had ample means, not only allowed him by an indulgent father, but money of his own for the manner of expending which he was accountable to no one.

And the memory of many, many favors that fell to the poor student from the pocket of the rich one brought tears to the eyes that a moment before had been stern, and glittering, and vengeful. He got up from the lounge and put an arm across Tom's shoulders.

"Tom," he said, and there was a sob in the strong man's voice, "isn't there a straight story to tell? *Don't* leave things all in the air like this. Let me tell *you* something, old man. On that very morning when the robbery was discovered your father's heart was almost broken. Somehow he suspected you, for he tried his best to stop the police investigation.

"The inspector wanted a list of the stolen articles, with a full description. Your mother and Joyce made out that list. Your father, who had done so much for me, pleaded with me not to let the list go in, not to let the investigation go on. I promised.

"Joyce came with the list, all ignorant of what was in your father's mind, and your father almost fainted. Your mother took charge of him, and I took Joyce out on the side veranda and told her your father's wishes. She could not understand. Then your mother came to us with your cuff-link which she found near her bureau. Then Joyce understood, and tore up the list and threw the bits away.

"Later, she found the letter from A. G., and we read it together. One thousand dollars is a large or small sum of money according to conditions. I knew it was much more than you could command, and told Joyce to read the next letter that came in that handwriting.

"I told her that if no letter came, indicating that you had paid the gambling debt, things looked bad. If another did come, you were innocent of the theft. That was yesterday—we will call it now. When I got to the job I was pleased to find you there without a trace of liquor. But you changed my pleasure to pain when you told me that you had paid your gambling debts. My first inward query was Where did you get a thousand dollars?

"Now I find you prowling around my house at midnight. Tom, can't you see that things look black—for you?"

"My God!"

Tom raised his head and Fanning looked, with a pang of pity, upon a white, drawn face that seemed not Tom's at all, but an older man's.

"I know—I *thought* dad moved as if he was awake. He *saw* me in the room, Fanning."

"I judged as much, but he would not, of course, tell any one *that*."

"No, God bless him, the dear old dad!"

Then the clouds were shattered and the storm broke. Great sobs racked and tortured the young fellow's breast, and he wept as men weep when they try long to suppress their tears and then break down.

"Good old dad! He would have shielded me! He thought I was a thief and still stood by me. And I was paying for all this wealth of love by filling my skin full of rotten booze and gambling myself into hell. And good old Joyce! She tore up the list to help save me. Does my mother—"

He could go no further, and another fit of sobbing shook his frame.

"No, your mother has no such thought,"

Tom was clearly in a highly nervous state.

"Rest a while on the lounge, old man," Fanning told him. "If you feel sleepy, sleep. We have all the time there is. We'll get the worm out of the apple somehow."

"But you! Don't you want to go to bed?"

"No. I slept four hours. I couldn't sleep now, anyway, if I hadn't been to bed in a week. I'll smoke—and think."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### EXPLAINING THE THOUSAND.

ALMOST at once Tom fell into a troubled doze. Fanning, smoking another mild cigar, sat gloomily watching the recumbent form. At intervals a violent twitching of Tom's body showed the nervous strain that held him even in slumber. And, gloomy as was Fanning's face, far gloomier were his thoughts.

Was this excess of emotion contrition for guilty acts, or the outburst of a heart broken by unjust suspicion? He could not tell.

The one saving theory that Fanning had nursed, that Tom had secretly obtained money from his mother on some pretext or other with which to pay his gambling debts, seemed to be shattered.

Tom had asked, or was about to ask, if his mother shared the feeling of his father and Joyce. He had said nothing that led even to the vaguest hope that Mrs. Kendry had advanced the thousand dollars.

Fanning must wait for the explanation, if there was one forthcoming, till the tortured boy waked from his troubled sleep.

It was three o'clock in the morning when Tom opened his eyes, rubbed his knuckles into them and sat up.

"Gee whiz! How long have I been asleep?"

"About two hours, rather less," answered Fanning.

"And have you been sitting there awake all the time?"

"Yes. I brought this magazine home with me last night, but was too tired to read. I had my sleep then, and have been reading now while you had yours. I think we'll have a cup of coffee."

He went to the kitchen, perfectly competent to do what was wanted without the aid of any servant, and the aroma of strong coffee soon floated through to Tom. He sat on the lounge with his head bowed in his hands.

But all this could not go on at three o'clock in the morning without arousing Benson. Benson the ever faithful, Benson the never failing. Fanning heard a slight patter on the servants' stairs, that had their lower landing at the front of the kitchen, and, looking up, he beheld an apparition that made him utter a shout and howl of joy and that brought Tom running through the passage.

Benson stood on the bottom step of the staircase clad in a red flannel nightshirt, and his black trousers, into which he had tucked the voluminous skirts of the gown. Benson was protuberantly proportioned in front even without any clothes on at all, and now stuffed out with his great nightshirt he assumed a comical shape.

His feet were bare. In his right hand he carried a massive holster pistol, a relic of the Civil War.

Grim, determined, and warlike was Benson. He did not unbend even when Tom joined his laughter with Fanning's.

"I heard a noise, sir, and voices. I came to see," he said.

"You did well, Benson," replied Fanning. "I thank you for your zeal, and compliment you upon your courage. Forgive me for laughing, but honestly you looked like a comic supplement when I first saw you. Come along and have a cup of coffee. My friend Mr. Kendry arrived late and we are about to eat a bite. Anything doing?"

"Well, sir," said Benson, laying his huge weapon on a side table, "I can cook you a couple of chops from the icebox, or bring you what's left of the turkey you had Sunday."

"Let's pick the skeleton," suggested Tom. "It is fitting. There are so many skeletons invited to this feast that to have the feast a skeleton suits the situation."

"Bring in the Turk," directed Fanning with a laugh. "We'll help the Allies by destroying one, anyway."

It was not as enemies that these two sat down to that early morning lunch. All bitterness had passed. Tom, peering over his cup, looked keenly at Fanning. Setting down the cup he said:

"So you are going to marry Joyce. When was it settled?"

"Last night at six o'clock."

Tom stared at his proposed brother-in-law, and picked up a turkey bone.

"Why, the deuce!" he said. "I was talking to Joyce about six o'clock myself. You were not at the house."

"No, but she promised me over the telephone."

Tom burst into a laugh.

"Was that it?" he cried joyously, with no trace of the agitation he had shown before his nap. "By Jove! The telephone did ring, and she left me to go to the hall and answer. When she came back her face was red as a beet. And she cut me off without a good-by and rushed up-stairs—to tell mother, I suppose."

"She naturally would. Now it will be up to me to tell your father."

"Oh, leave that to mom. You can bet your bottom dollar they spent half the night jawing about it. Well, you won't have any obstacles to overcome in that quarter."

"I won't be stopped by any obstacle in any quarter. Joyce having given her promise, Joyce is the only one who can break it. Anybody else who gets in the way gets hurt."

"That's the way to talk, old man. That's the Fanning that carried the eleven through to victory in the —"

"Oh, shut up," cut in Fanning.

He was marveling much. The change in Tom was so vast that it puzzled him. A sound sleep would not affect his spirits to such an extent. He seemed more boyish than ever in the exuberance of his happy mood.

Having seen him only two hours before racked with sobs that wrenched his very soul, Fanning had reason enough for marveling at him now.

Leaving the willing Benson to clean up after their impromptu feast the two friends returned to the spacious dining-room. Tom had no cigarettes with him, and Fanning never used them. So cigars again came into requisition.

Fanning sat in a large leather upholstered arm-chair, and motioned for Tom to occupy its mate, not far away. Fanning lighted his cigar as Tom did, threw his feet up on the lounge, leaned back in solid comfort, and said:

"Now fire away, old chap. Let's hear all about it."

Puffing hard a few times to get his cigar going well, Tom began.

"Boardman, let me say right at the start off that I had no more to do with the robbery than you had. What I told you and Joyce on board the Sapphire was the truth. No need to repeat that now.

"I got into bad company. There is no need, even, to drag in the names. The A. G. who wrote that letter is a man who lives on a small income and what he makes by gambling. I have an idea that he is not always square, but I have no proof, so I don't want to tell his name. He is paid, and out of the picture. Now, as to how I raised the money.

"The playing was not done in a club or a gambling house. It was done in a private house, and you are too much of a man and a gentleman to demand the name. Well, outside the gambling the house is respectable. I lost the thousand, not in one night, but in a long run of hard luck. This A. G. is an importunate gentleman when anybody owes him money, but not quite such a stickler for promptness when he is the debtor.

"He demanded money—what I owed—as you saw in the letter. Of course, I didn't have any thousand, as you know. Well, what does the polecat do but go to the woman who owns that house, our hostess, and tell her that unless I pay that thousand within twenty-four hours he would tell the police that she was carrying on a gambling resort. This frightened her, so she gave me some jewels to pawn, and lent me the thousand with which to pay A. G."

"Then your debt hasn't been paid, but transferred from one creditor to another."

"Yes, but Mrs.—my friend—will be in no hurry. She will have the money in a month or so to redeem her stuff, and I will pay her when I can."

"You will pay her in cash before noon today," said Fanning grimly. "Go on with your tale."

"Well, there is only to-night's fiasco to tell about. I am firmly convinced that Batterson and Marie—what was it Joyce said her name was—Marie—"

"Nicasse," prompted Fanning.

"Yes, Marie Nicasse. Well, I am, as I say, convinced that those two precious ones robbed our house. And ever since the robbery I've been on the lookout, when I could get away from the job, for either one of them. You couldn't fool me, Board, but I fooled you. I had no illusions concerning my value on that job as timekeeper. It was a neat way of helping me out without doing or saying anything to hurt my feelings."

"Just as you did to me when you had money and I had none. But drop that and go on."

"I wasn't on the job half the time. Whenever I knew the way was clear I went on the scout. And I've seen Batterson."

"You have seen Batterson?"

"More than once. And he looks down, Board, down. And once I saw him skulking near the job. You were not there. When he saw me he walked away.

"Last night after I had my dinner I took a walk. I don't know what possessed me, but I decided to take a trolley ride. I got on a car without paying much attention to where it went, and found myself passing St. Raymond's Cemetery. Then I knew I was coming this way.

"At the end of the road I got off, and didn't know what to do with myself. I had some cigarettes, and wandered around smoking, and finally sat down on an old stone wall to rest a bit. Well, along comes another car and a fellow gets off that I'll swear was Batterson.

"He was pretty well disguised, with a hat pulled down over his eyes and his collar turned up. But I am sure it was Batterson. He started down toward your place, and I followed. I am sure he was in your woods when you came out of the house. What he wanted, I don't know. But he either saw me, or your being up and around scared him off. Then you collared me, and—that's all."

For a moment Fanning was silent.

"For Heaven's sake, don't tell me you don't believe me!" Tom cried, showing an agony of spirit that touched Fanning to the heart.

"I do believe you, Tom. There's my hand on it. It's a queer tale, this last part, but I believe the whole thing. Now get to bed and we'll fix it up to pay your woman friend by daylight."

"Nix on the bed thing. I'm going home. I'll sneak in, get to bed, and be nice and cozy and innocent when dad gets up in the morning. I won't go to the job. My time-keeping is a fake, anyway."

"So it is, Tom. Well, go fool dad into thinking you got to bed early," said Fanning with a hearty laugh. "And I'll give you—"

He went to a little desk and wrote about half a minute.

"There's a check for two thousand on the Bronx Borough Bank. Pay your friend—and anything else you owe—and forget it."

"But, Fanning—"

"Shut up and get out of here."

"I can't—"

"Get out of here or go to bed."

Tom laughed, wrung Fanning's hand, put on his hat and went out. His walk to the end of the Throggs Neck trolley line did not take very long. At the end of the line one other person was waiting for the next car.

Tom dived behind some bushes. The person was Mr. Batterson.

## CHAPTER XX.

### LOOKING UP AT A WINDOW.

FOR obvious reasons Tom did not wish to come face to face with Batterson just at that time. He had no doubt that the fellow had seen him on Fanning's place, and if so, Batterson would understand the reason for his being there. But he was also eager to reach home before daylight and get to bed before any of the household were astir.

Rather, however, than meet Batterson, he resolved to permit him to board that car, while he, Tom, would content himself with the next, though at that hour the interval between cars was very long. But these intervals were also very irregular. The crews of the cars seemed to have no schedule, or something would occur that delayed a car. So that two of them might arrive at the terminus and leave again close together in point of time. And this was the very thing that had happened that morning.

The car that Tom expected to board when it came, and for which Batterson was waiting, was a delayed car, so that two arrived in quick succession.

This brought about a condition of affairs that produced results of such magnitude and importance that the actors in this history would have stood aghast with horror had they been told beforehand what was destined to occur.

As one car was delayed and the other on time, it followed as a matter of trolley car reasoning that as both had arrived at once they must leave at the same time. Tom, peeping from his hiding place, saw Batterson board the car that was to start first. He waited patiently, and when that car began to move away he ran and boarded the following one, which started off in about a minute.

There was not, all the way to Westchester Square, more than three hundred feet between the two cars.

At Westchester a change of cars was necessary. Here no such good luck could be

expected for Tom. This was not the terminus of the line which he must now take to reach Tremont.

If Batterson was also going to Tremont, Tom, unless he waited for another car, must travel with him. There was no car going in either direction in sight.

Keeping the standing cars between himself and the other man, Tom began studying the situation.

He did not want Batterson to see him now. After eluding him thus far he did not want to lose such advantage as he had gained, if he had gained any.

Standing at the curb was a grimy looking automobile, which had the appearance of a working car, and a sleepy chauffeur stood leaning against it.

Tom went over to him.

"Are you going to do anything for half an hour?" asked Tom.

"I don't know if I 'm going to do anything in a week. I am to meet a fellow here at six o'clock and take him and some tools up to Larchmont. But he had some sort of colic yesterday and I don't know whether he'll be around or not. Why? What's it to you?"

"It's that to you to drive me to Edgewood Terrace and Grand Boulevard," said Tom, flashing a five dollar bill before the astonished chauffeur.

He proved that he was actually very much alive and wide awake. He stood up straight.

"I'll be square with you, young feller," he said. "I'll *start*. This machine ain't none of the best, and has sulky fits when she won't go at all. Now, if you want to take a chance, jump in."

"I'll take a chance," said Tom, laughing. "If you break down I can always take the trolley when it comes along."

It was a heavy, lumbering old machine, and made poor headway. But no trolley overtook it, and Tom felt that his five dollars were well spent, inasmuch as he had Fanning's check for two thousand in his pocket, one-half of which was his own.

But at West Farms something happened to the machine, and a delay followed. The chauffeur swore and worked, and between both efforts got her going again.

The trolley passed them, and Tom saw Batterson sitting inside. He turned his face away to prevent the other from recognizing him.

At Echo Park, a small green island surrounded by streets, just west of Webster Avenue, the machine had another fit of sulks.

"I'll walk the rest of the way," Tom said, getting out.

"But I haven't earned my money yet," objected the chauffeur.

"Yes, I think you have. You are not sure of getting back to Westchester," Tom told him with a laugh.

He started off at a brisk pace. By this time dawn had done a little more than just appear. It was gray daylight.

He reached Edgewood Terrace, and stopped at the corner he was just about to turn. A man stood in front of the Kendry house, with his head thrown slightly back as though he was looking at the upper windows.

"Batterson!" muttered Tom in amazement. "What devilment has the fellow got in his head anyway? Well, I'll watch, and if he tries to get inside it'll be good-by Batterson."

But Batterson did not seem to have any such intention. He just stood like a man enchanted, or a silly fool, and there isn't much difference, after all, looking up at Joyce Kendry's windows.

To what purpose? The windows were open, but were hung with heavy lace curtains. There was no wind at this hour, and the curtains fell straight.

There was no light in the room, and it was an hour when Joyce might well be supposed to be enjoying her soundest sleep.

But stay—did Tom see the lace curtain on the right side move—ever so little?

Probably not. After gazing fatuously for a few minutes longer Batterson muttered a curse and walked away.

He started in the direction of Lamartine Avenue, and Tom saw him take something from his pocket and examine it under an electric street light.

Strong as had been Tom's desire to get to bed before daylight and make his father think he had come home at a reasonable hour, it was swept aside like an idle thought at the sight of Batterson.

"I'll see what the rascal is up to," he said to himself. "He means mischief."

He followed Batterson, passing his own house without a look in its direction.

Then the right hand lace curtain in Joyce's window, which *had* moved—just a

little—fell back into place and a white, slender finger that had held it aside was withdrawn.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### ANOTHER ON THE TRAIL.

THAT had been a sleepless night for Joyce Kendry. Tom had told the truth when he explained to Fanning that he had been talking with Joyce at six o'clock—the time Fanning telephoned. And the moment had been a happy one for Joyce in that Tom showed by his acts, his old time manner of flippant speech, and the sweetness of his breath that he had not touched liquor that day.

It had been Joyce's custom, when Fanning did not stop on his way home from the job, to question Tom upon his return to dinner as to the exact condition of affairs on Lamartine Avenue. And so it had been on that evening before Mr. Kendry was called from his den, or Mrs. Kendry came from her room, for dinner.

"Well, how have things progressed to-day, Tom?" his sister had asked.

"Oh, so-so. The same old drilling and the same old blasting. Takes time, but every day counts. You can see progress every night. And we put up the office to-day."

"Office? What office?"

"Well, Fanning being a yachtsman these days calls it the chart room. It is a portable house, really, fitted up as an office. There is a desk built against a side wall, with drawers. Here the plans will be studied by architect, builder, master mason, all those in charge of the various divisions of the work—sub contractors, you know."

"And will Boardman use that office?"

"Oh, yes, when he feels like it. One of the drawers will be his own. It is already marked 'private.'"

They had dinner, Mr. Kendry returned, haggard and bent, to his den, having spoken hardly a word during the meal. Tom smoked a cigarette in the dining-room. Then he got his hat.

"Are you going out to-night, Tom?" Joyce asked wistfully. "Why not stay in?"

"Oh, I'm going nowhere in particular, just for a walk. I'll be home early."

But he was not home at bed-time, and Joyce's heart sank. The day, she feared, had been too long for him without drink, and she feared he had succumbed to whatever temptation had come his way.

The household retired, and all slept but Joyce. The faithful sister lay awake worrying about the erring brother whom she loved so well.

"Ah," she said to herself more than once, "if he was only like Boardman!"

At midnight she got up from her bed and throwing a bathrobe upon her shoulders went softly to his room to see if he had returned and gone to his bed so quietly that she had not heard his step. He was not there.

For two long hours she lay then, listening for the well-known tread upon the stairs. She heard the hall clock strike two.

Thinking that she must have dozed, and that surely Tom must be home by that time, she visited his room again. He was not there.

Her eyes filled with tears and vague misgivings assailed her. Even with all his accumulation of bad habits of late he had always been in bed before two o'clock.

Then followed two more miserable hours, during which she lay with wide open eyes not only listening for his footsteps on the stairs, but for the ringing of the doorbell. For now she felt assured that Tom had not remained away from home so late of his own volition, but that something had happened to him, and that any moment might bring a messenger of ill tidings.

But no messenger came, neither did Tom. At four o'clock, hoping against her own knowledge, she went once more to his room. It was as vacant as before, and her overwrought heart gave way and she wept.

From that hour she was up and down stairs, looking into the dining-room, into Tom's room, into the den, into every room where a sick or wounded man, or one overcome by liquor, could drop into a temporary resting place. But she found no signs of Tom.

By the time the first faint line of gray was visible in the east her alarm grew to such proportions that she could no longer go to bed, where there would be no rest for her. She looked from her windows into the street expecting to see him stagger through the gate, or come home assisted by some of his acquaintances.

And so it had happened that at the height of her anxiety she saw, while looking from her window, the form of Batterson loom up from the nearest corner.

She was filled with amazement and dismay. What could the man want?

She let the lace curtain fall into place, holding back with one finger one edge sufficiently far to give her a peep-hole. She saw Batterson assume the position in which Tom had discovered him, with head thrown back, and gaze fixedly upon her window.

She wondered if he had seen her—if he knew she was looking at him from her coign of vantage.

Then, after a time, she saw him turn on his heel, and walk away. She had begun to breathe with greater ease when her heart leaped again as Tom hove into view, and without a glance toward the house went on in Batterson's wake.

Now her fears transcended anything she had felt before. That something was amiss, and had been amiss all that miserable night, she felt was certain. And her wonderfully acute prescience warned her that the end was not yet.

Her first impulse, when Tom passed the gate, was to open the curtain wide and call to him. But Batterson was then standing under an electric light examining the object he had taken from his pocket.

To call Tom was to give Batterson warning that Tom was trailing him. That would lead to further danger in the future. She watched them, with her slender neck stretched from the window, till Batterson turned a corner, and, Tom following, both were lost to view.

The excited and now thoroughly alarmed girl drew back from the window, and stood with her hands clasped tight over her heart, her eyes staring at the curtain, her brain on fire.

"Lamartine Avenue! The job!" she whispered. "What does it mean?"

Flashing with searing heat through her brain went the memory of Tom's often repeated words:

"I'll kill him. Some day or other I'll have to kill Batterson."

"God give me help and strength to do what's best," she murmured, and then began hurriedly to dress.

But she did not put on any of her pretty and becoming morning gowns. Instead, she dressed for driving, and added a heavy veil to her outfit.

Her movements were quick, but without noise.

More from habit than for any reason in her mind, she put her purse in the pocket of her coat. Hanging at a corner of her little desk, was a key to the garage.

The chauffeur, a young man who would have died in her service, slept up-stairs in the garage building. But she would not waken him. This was her own business, and alone she would attend to it.

The night before she had received her monthly allowance from her father, and money of her own was in her purse.

She took the key, and crept softly down the servants' stairway, thus avoiding the necessity of passing the room where her father and mother were asleep. Letting herself out the kitchen door, locking it from the outside, and taking the key with her, she sped to the door of the garage and unlocked that.

She knew that to get the red car out without waking any one, especially the young chauffeur, was practically impossible. But she was determined upon her errand, and once determined it took much to make Joyce Kendry falter in her purpose.

She got the car outside, and no one in the house heard. But the chauffeur, half dressed, came bounding down the stairs with an automatic in his hand.

"Here, you!" he cried, "I'll blow a hole—"

"Hush," Joyce said. "Don't make a noise. I was wakeful, and felt that a morning spin would do me good."

"Great Scott, Miss Kendry! Is it you? I thought it was one of those automobile pirates who have been stealing cars all over Tremont."

"It's all right," she said. "Only I didn't want to disturb any one."

"But—shall I go with you? It is dangerous for a girl—a young lady— to be out alone at his hour."

"I'm not afraid."

This was true enough. She was not afraid. But there flashed into her mind the thought that there might be a man's work to do where she was going, and Jimmy Wade could be trusted.

He loved Tom, she knew that, and knew that whatever he could do for her he would do with full heart and fervor.

"Get dressed as quickly as possible—don't waste a second," she said. "And bring your pistol."

The words, especially the final command, and her quick, breathless manner of speaking made the chauffeur open his eyes. But he made no reply in words.

"What the deuce is up?" he asked himself as he went up three steps at a time to his room.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### EARLY MORNING DISCOVERIES.

A CITY ordinance calls for a watchman where explosives are used for excavating purposes, when the actual work is not in progress.

Fanning had nothing to do with this. The sub contractor who did the blasting was under a heavy bond, and was responsible for all damage to adjacent property or to persons passing.

In this case there was no adjacent property to be damaged, there being no buildings in that block on either side of Lamartine Avenue. There was little fear of injuring any passer-by, for the sub contractor was a careful man, and before every blast his flagmen carried their red flannel flags an unusual distance in each direction.

Nevertheless, a watchman had been employed, and his name was Gregorio Attula. He had a little shanty near the magazine in which the dynamite was kept, and here he was supposed to be, wide awake, from the time work was stopped at five o'clock until it was begun again the next morning.

The portable office, which had been set up the day before, stood about twenty-five feet from the watchman's shanty.

Gregorio Attula was, no doubt as faithful as the average watchman. Sitting alone in a shanty during the long still hours of the night has nothing to recommend it as a pleasure pursuit. And it was Gregorio's custom, when the dawn appeared, and everything was calm and safe, to slip away to the corner where Tom was wont to go during the day, and refresh himself after a long, weary night, returning to his shanty in time to meet the first laborers and be relieved.

The red car, swinging into Lamartine Avenue, sped to the job and stopped. Wade leaped out and assisted Joyce, who never needed assistance, and who seldom needed a chauffeur. But Wade's business was to drive Mr. Kendry's car and look after both.

"Oh, my God!" burst from him as soon as Joyce's feet had touched the ground.

And the ejaculation was not without reason.

In the dim but now increasing light they could see about them. The electric lights were out, but they saw enough—too much.

Tom lay with his feet inside the office door and his head on a loose piece of rock that had been thrown to the street by an improperly covered blast, or perhaps dropped from a wagon carrying away debris of stone not fit for foundation purposes.

Without looking further Joyce uttered a cry of dismay and knelt at her brother's side.

"Oh, great Heaven! He's dead, he's dead, he's dead!" she moaned. "Batterson has killed him. Tom! Tom! Dear Tom! Speak to me, Tom!"

And indeed it seemed as though the unfortunate fellow tried to do so. For he stirred in his unconsciousness and moaned.

"Thank God, he isn't dead!" exclaimed Joyce.

But Wade either did not hear or paid no attention, for he had stepped past Tom's prostrate body and entered the office. The light was dimmer inside, but the chauffeur was sharp-eyed.

Lying on the floor, under a shattered shelf and a row of drawers was Batterson.

"Here's Batterson, Miss Kendry," said Wade. "I've felt his heart. It doesn't beat. He's dead."

"Oh, merciful Father, Jimmy! They —they fought—and Tom has killed him."

In the dim light and in the excitement of the moment, Wade had failed to discover the shattered desk built against the wall.

"Tom's alive, Jimmy. Oh, if we had some brandy!"

"I'll get some blamed quick."

He leaped into the red car, and in less time than it takes to write it down he was at the corner.

There are laws, and laws. Certain saloons, in fact the majority of them, open according to the law that governs them, at six o'clock. Others steal an hour, and begin a back room business at five.

Sitting at a round table in the rear room of the corner place was Gregorio Attula, drinking his second glass of morning tonic.

Wade, whose duties had not taken him near the job before, did not know the watchman, and Gregorio did not know Wade.

Wade asked for, received, and paid for a bottle of brandy, and rushed out, saying nothing.

"Automobile accident, I suppose," remarked the bartender, noting Wade's garb.

The brandy half restored Tom's senses, and he lifted his right hand. Then Wade made the discovery that the hand was tightly clenched around one end of a short iron bar.

Plenty of pieces of pipe and iron bars may be found where cutting and fitting pipes and anchorages have been going on for months.

Joyce was distracted with terror and another kind of fear. Terror of the police, and fear that Tom was seriously, if not mortally hurt.

The iron bar in his hand was clear evidence to her excited mind that her brother had killed Batterson. That it had been done in a fair fight she had no doubt, but who could prove that?

Wade was scarcely more competent to reason than she. He was young, a good and careful driver of automobiles, but his experience in the employ of Mr. Kendry had not brought him face to face with any such horror as this.

His knees were trembling, and his blood was chilled. He had no advice to give, no older wisdom to superimpose upon her girlish and half hysterical impulse.

"Hospital?" he questioned, thinking that this naturally would be her first thought.

But thoughts far different were coursing like liquid fire through the girl's frantic brain. She loved Tom, that was true. But there were her father and mother to be considered.

Joyce, it must be remembered, knew nothing of the conversation held that morning at three o'clock between Fanning and Tom on Throggs Neck.

How many people had heard Tom threaten Batterson. Joyce did not know. Tom was not a reticent person.

"Is he much hurt, do you think?" she asked Wade.

"I don't think so, Miss Kendry. There's some blood and a few cuts. No smashed skull, or anything like that."

"Let's get him into the car before somebody comes."

Between them they lifted Tom, who continued to improve under the stimulating effects of the brandy, and he even contrived to help himself into the machine.

"Sit with him. I'll drive," said Joyce.

With Tom's head resting on his shoulder Wade sat quiet in the rear, and under the skilful guidance of Joyce the red car moved swiftly from the scene.

Neither Joyce nor Wade, in their excitement, had noted the strange fact that Tom was in his shirt-sleeves.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### IN WHICH TWO MEN RUN.

GREGORIO ATTULA had had his customary amount of morning stimulant, and went back to his shanty. Except for this stolen half hour of relaxation Gregorio was a watchman who was zealous in the performance of his duty.

And it was his habit, upon his return every morning from his visit to the corner, with his strength revived, and his courage unquestionable, to make a tour of the premises and make sure that all was well before his relief arrived.

And so, this morning, having reached the scene of his labors, and passing a red car on the way, Gregorio first went to his shanty to make certain no loiterer or tramp had taken lodgings there. Finding this all secure he mounted the highest remaining point of rock and examined the landscape with a critical eye.

The great derrick was still in place. No one had stolen that in his absence. No one had even disturbed it. No one was in sight.

The irregular piles of broken stone, and the regularly piled building blocks were just as they should be.

Then he went to the office.

The body of a man lay on the floor. There was no doubt that he was dead. Gregorio had seen a good many dead men before he came to America. Whether he came from Sicily or Naples does not matter, and was not known. But he knew a dead man when he saw one.

For a moment he stood with his mouth agape, his eyes bulging from his head, his tongue dry and swelling, a cold perspiration oozing from his not very clean skin, and his fingers going open and shut in a nervous paroxysm.

Then with a horrified exclamation he ran.

Visions of the New York police, of whom he had heard the most terrifying tales, and the sight of a single one of whom in uniform made him spit on the ground and caused his teeth to chatter, filled him with an unholy fear that made his heart almost stop beating. But he ran.

Gregorio had learned to be a good runner in his native land. If he wasn't run-

ning away from the police he was running either away from or after some member of an opposing secret society. And now he ran as he had never run in his life before.

All weariness fell from him. No desire for sleep assailed him. The only thing that was in his mind was the question how far he could run before he dropped dead.

He went up Lamartine Avenue as far as Fordham. He swung into Fordham Road, turned north, and then steered across Poe Park, toward Kingsbridge Road.

He ran by devious paths, which means various streets, till he reached Broadway. Then he turned north on Broadway and ran on.

People were beginning to stir. Women were going to bakeries for the morning rolls and milk. Men were moving toward their trolleys or regular trains, to make their long trips to whatever business took them down-town so early.

These had a fleeting vision of a bare-headed Italian, for he had lost his hat, flying northward with the speed of a terrified deer. They looked, wondered a moment, and went about their business.

It was one Tomasso Gordo who discovered the body of Batterson. He, too, was terrified, but his was not the responsibility. He merely filled his pipe, for he was ahead of time, and sat down on a rock to smoke until the arrival of his immediate boss.

This man appeared at his regular hour, and Tomasso pointed to the office.

"What's the matter?" asked the foreman.

"Deada man. Look, see."

The foreman stared at Tomasso a moment, noticed the smoke curling from his pipe, thought he had gone crazy, and then went to the office door. He clapped his hands to his head and uttered a loud yell. Then he ran.

This man was not as good a runner as Gregorio, but he had no intention of running so far. He continued running only till he ran into Mike Cardigan, who, six feet tall, and broad in proportion, and wearing a blue uniform ornamented with brass buttons, was swinging his feet and a club along a near-by avenue.

"Come quick," said the foreman with a gasp. "There's a dead man in Mr. Fanning's office."

"And where the devil might Mr. Fanning's office be?" asked Cardigan.

"It's at the big job on Lamartine Avenue."

Cardigan almost leaped from the ground. He owed his own job partly to Mr. Kendry, and hoped to owe his promotion partly to Mr. Kendry's influence and partly to his own worthiness. Of the latter no one, not even his superiors in the force, had any doubt.

"Miss Kendry's orphan asylum, is it?"

"Yes," gasped the foreman.

"Is it one of your dago workmen that's killed?"

"No. It's an American."

"Hurt by a blast?"

"No. We haven't blasted to-day."

"What does the watchman say?"

"I haven't seen the watchman."

Cardigan's long legs got him to the job almost as quickly as the foreman's short ones had got him to Cardigan. The foreman had run, and Cardigan walked.

"Good God," he said, when he was in the office. "That's Batterson, the man Mr. Kendry got the fortune away from for Mr. Fanning. Some case, this."

But it was not Cardigan's case. He stepped to the same corner where Gregorio had spent his half hour of relaxation and telephoned the information to the police-station on Bathgate Avenue and Tremont.

Had Batterson been an unknown man the regular police procedure in such a case would have sufficed. But the case of Fanning vs. Batterson, revived in the memory of the police by the robbery of Mr. Kendry's house, gave the discovery of Batterson's body an unusual importance.

And in the shortest possible time all those high police officials who had visited the Kendrys after the robbery were on the job. They were accompanied by two detectives, a policeman in uniform, and, as the automobile containing the head of the Bronx detective bureau arrived the dead wagon came to add its gruesome but necessary duties to the general excitement.

But first they must notify the coroner, and another automobile containing a coroner and the coroner's physician arrived.

The drills did not drill that morning.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A SUMMONS FROM THE POLICE.

WHEN Mr. Kendry rose that morning the house was unusually quiet. When he had dressed and gone down-stairs to wait for Mrs. Kendry to join him at break-

fast he missed Joyce's voice. She was up before him, as a rule.

He went into the dining-room and discovered Katie with her forefinger on her chin contemplating the table as if the simple breakfast of the Kendrys presented a prodigious problem.

"Katie, is Joyce not down yet?" he inquired.

In the Kendry house the son and daughter were Tom and Joyce to the servants when others were speaking. Katie would have said Miss Joyce. She did so now in her reply.

"Miss Joyce is sleeping, sir. I went up to see if she was ill."

"And she is not?"

"No, sir, only sleeping."

"Did Tom have his breakfast on time and get off to work?"

A troubled look came upon Katie's face. Whether to tell Mr. Kendry that Tom had not been at home all night, or to leave that information for others to impart, was a question that puzzled her.

But she knew her employers well, and deceit in that house had been a thing unknown. Katie resolved to tell the truth.

"Mr. Tom has not been home, sir."

Kendry swung toward her with a face that at once began to blanch. With so much already weighing upon his mind the first scent of fresh trouble startled him.

"Not at home—do you mean that he wasn't home all night?"

"He was not, sir. Mary tells me that his bed has not been slept in."

Mary was the up-stairs girl.

Mr. Kendry looked thunderstruck.

"That is strange. Where can he have got to, and—but good Lord, I hope nothing has happened to him."

Mrs. Kendry made her appearance, the same frail, sweet little woman, and Kendry wondered whether it would be better for her to be told or not. He finally determined to say nothing.

"Is Joyce not down?" asked the mother.

"Katie tells me she is still sleeping."

"James!"

"Well, my dear, I don't see any reason why you should exclaim over it."

"But *Joyce!*"

"Well, even Joyce may be tired and want a longer sleep than usual."

"Not unless something unusual is the matter."

But just then Joyce herself, looking refreshed after her few winks, joined them, this time wearing a neat morning gown.

"My dear," said Mrs. Kendry, "I was beginning to fear you were ill. You never sleep so late."

"I don't usually like awake all night listening for my brother," answered Joyce soberly. "Tom has not been home."

"Not all night?" exclaimed Mrs. Kendry.

"Not all night," Joyce repeated. There was a weary drag in her voice.

"Why, what do you suppose is the reason? Where can he be?"

Joyce merely shook her head, and went abruptly to the kitchen to hide the tears that welled unbidden in her eyes.

The three ate a meager breakfast. Each had thoughts that drove away all appetite.

They were scarcely finished when Fanning arrived in his car for his usual morning conference with Joyce. He came in smiling, even beaming. For Fanning was in a very happy mood.

Joyce had promised to marry him, which in itself was enough to lift him to the uttermost heights. Then, too, he had listened to, and believed, Tom Kendry's story at three o'clock that morning. The few hours' sleep he had snatched after Tom had gone were sufficient for his great strength, and he felt as though he could fight the world.

He had pictured to himself, during his rapid drive from Throggs Neck, the successful issue of Tom's scheme to get to bed before Mr. Kendry rose. He remembered that Tom had said he would not go to the job that morning. So, when he greeted the others, and saw Joyce's cheeks go red, he thought that Tom was still in bed.

"Fanning, my hand," said Mr. Kendry heartily. "Joyce told her mother, and, naturally, her mother told me. If I were not so worried about Tom I should banter you a little about your unusual methods of doing things. Of course an engagement entered into over the telephone may be the latest, but I am not up in social usages any more. And I might, if I were in a joking mood, compare Batterson's manner of procedure with yours. *He* asked me first."

"Perhaps," replied Fanning, taking Mrs. Kendry's hand in his and bending low to kiss it, "Batterson was prepared to receive a negative reply from you, in which case he would say nothing to Joyce."

"Ah! I had not thought of it in that light. But *you* did not seem to disturb yourself with any such anticipation."

Fanning unblushingly put his arm around Joyce's waist.

"I have worked hard since I was sixteen, Mr. Kendry," he said, "and I always got what I worked for. No negative would have stood in my way so long as Joyce herself said yes. You know the Sapphire is very swift and the Caribbean Islands are filled with pirates' caves."

"*Very* good," laughed Mr. Kendry. "Joyce living in a cave would be a sight. But there is never a negative in your case, my boy. I wish I was as well satisfied with Tom. In fact, I wish I knew where the fellow is just now."

Fanning felt a spasm of alarm.

He looked inquiringly into Joyce's face, now gone suddenly from red to white. She put his arm away from her and sat down slowly in the same chair she had occupied at breakfast.

"Yes, it is cause of much worriment, just at this time," added Mrs. Kendry. "Tom was not at home all night."

Stricken into something like a graven image, Fanning stood staring at Mr. Kendry. He was, as has been demonstrated, a quick thinker. He knew at once that the truth must be told here, so far as he knew it.

"Are you sure Tom is not in his room?" he asked slowly.

"Your voice and manner indicate that you know something about this," said Mr. Kendry promptly. "Katie tells me that Tom's bed has not been slept in."

"Why, that's almost incredible," declared Fanning. "Tom spent most of the night with me. He started for home after midnight in perfectly good health and spirits."

"Started for home from where? Where did you and he spend the early part of the night?"

"At my place on Throggs Neck."

There were some features in the manner of their spending those hours that Fanning was not inclined to tell.

"And he left your house after midnight—how long after midnight?" asked Mr. Kendry.

"Oh, I can't say just the minute. He had ample time to reach home before cock-crow."

"And you say he was in good health and spirits?"

"Perfectly."

"Then illness or misfortune has overtaken him on the way," said Mrs. Kendry. "Now what shall we do? The poor boy may be lying in some woods or ditch, wounded and robbed." She began to weep.

Fanning suppressed a nervous quiver as he remembered that, according to Tom's story, Batterson was on Throggs Neck. Almost anything might be possible.

"Tom is strong and able to take care of himself," interposed Joyce, forcing herself to speak. "I don't think it is time to do anything just yet."

"But I do," sharply replied Mrs. Kendry. "There are robbers—"

The ringing of the bell gave them all a start, so highly strung had become their nerves. Katie went to the door.

"That may be Tom now," said Joyce.

"No," added Mr. Kendry, "that is not Tom. Tom never rings, for one thing. Even when in Albany he carried a key to the front door of this house. It is more likely a messenger from him."

But, held by their apprehensions and fears, neither Mr. Kendry nor Mrs. Kendry followed Katie to see who the early visitor might be. Fanning stood with knitted brow trying to imagine an explanation, and Joyce sat quiet, seemingly benumbed.

"Whoever it is, the visit cannot be of much importance," remarked Mr. Kendry. "Katie seems to be having it all to herself."

And Katie did, for her stay at the front door was unconscionably long.

But a heavy voice could now be heard, and a heavy step in the hall. Then Katie entered the room with a white, scared face, and without introduction or ceremony there followed her a detective, one who had been there on the robbery case and was remembered.

He carried on his arm a heavy sack-coat of gray cloth.

"I sincerely beg your pardon, Mr. and Mrs. Kendry," he said, "and regret the necessity of troubling you. But something has happened. Will you kindly tell me if this coat belongs to Mr. Thomas Kendry?"

"Oh, merciful Heaven! What is it—what can it be?" gasped Mrs. Kendry, sinking down on a chair and pressing her hands to her overladen heart.

Kendry stepped forward impetuously and touched the coat.

"I don't think so," he said quickly.

"Where did you get the coat?" asked Joyce, non-committal as to the ownership.

"Hanging on a fence post alongside your property, Miss Joyce, where you are building on Lamartine Avenue. Thomas Batter-

son was found dead in the little office building there early this morning. This coat was found by one of the workmen and brought to the chief. There are letters in the pocket addressed to Thomas Kendry, at this house, and one is signed Kitty Delmour."

They did nothing but stare at him.

Fanning was completely stunned. He recognized the coat as the one Tom had worn at his house.

"Batterson—dead?" he repeated after the long silent moments.

"Yes, dead," said the detective sharply, giving each one of the group a keen, suspicious look. "Is Tom Kendry in this house."

"He is not, sir," replied Mr. Kendry with acerbity. "Do I understand that you accuse my son of being a murderer?"

"*I* don't, not yet, Mr. Kendry, but the circumstances do. I have been a New York detective too long to jump at conclusions."

"Thank you for that, at least," broke in Joyce.

"What do you mean?" Mr. Kendry asked the detective.

"Why, take the whole thing and stew it down. Everybody knows that Batterson expected to marry Miss Kendry. Tremont has not yet outgrown its gossipy village age, Mr. Kendry. And everybody knows that Batterson lost his fortune through your efforts as a lawyer. Tom has been heard more than once to voice his dislike of Batterson.

"Now Batterson is dead, and Tom is missing, but his coat is found on a fence-post not a hundred feet from Batterson's body. A piece of iron bar is found where it would naturally be dropped after serving as a weapon—at the very door of the little office."

They were breathless. The doorbell rang again, and the white-faced Katie, struggling with a weakness she could not overcome, went to answer.

There was not so much delay this time. Almost immediately she returned, followed, as before, by a detective.

"Delaney," he said, speaking to the first arrival, "the inspector, and the chief of the bureau, and the coroner want all the family —all the Kendry family—to come to the station-house at once."

"Sixty-fifth?"

"Yes. It is the most convenient place to conduct the investigation."

Mrs. Kendry almost fainted. Mr. Kendry, summoning all his strength of will, straightened himself, and grew calm. Joyce looked at Fanning with brilliant but expressionless eyes.

"Will there be any objection if I accompany Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Kendry?" asked Fanning of the second detective.

"Let me see, are you not Mr. Fanning who got the fortune from Batterson?"

"Yes, I'm the man."

"Well, then, rather than objecting, I think the big ones will want you too."

"Thank you," answered Fanning. "I am at their service."

"Come, get dressed to go," said Mr. Kendry. "There is no sense in delay. We want the truth as much as they do."

Joyce and her mother went up-stairs to make ready.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### BEFORE THE INSPECTOR.

IT was a grim but courteous group of officials that greeted Mr. Kendry and his party when they arrived at the Bathgate Avenue police-station. They had been sitting in a semicircle, and all rose when Mrs. Kendry and Joyce entered. Fanning came last and was regarded with some curiosity and closer scrutiny than the others.

"Please sit down here," said the inspector, placing four chairs in a row.

They sat down, Mr. Kendry, Mrs. Kendry, Joyce, Fanning—in that order.

The inspector lost no time in getting at the business in hand.

"Mr. Kendry, you have been told probably by this time all we know concerning the mysterious death of Batterson. Let me, to offer a starting point, recapitulate. Your son Thomas, familiarly known as Tom, was known to bear no good will toward Batterson. Batterson, right or wrong as may be, had reason enough from his personal point of view, to bear ill will toward you and yours, and especially toward Mr. Fanning, who, I am glad to see, is present. I should have sent for him otherwise.

"Now Batterson's body is found in Fanning's temporary office at the spot where he is excavating for building purposes. Tom's coat is found on a near-by fence-post. Tom himself is missing. That sums up the situation as far as we have any information at present. Can you add anything to the general knowledge?"

Mr. Kendry was very pale, and trembled with his fears and weight of sorrow.

"I can add nothing to what you have said, inspector," he answered. "I only know that my son is not a murderer."

"Please bear in mind, Mr. Kendry, that this is an investigation, not a trial. Up to this time no actual charge has been made against your son. But Batterson is dead, and we must know the circumstances of his death. Where did your son spend the night?"

Mr. Kendry gave an involuntary start and turned slightly to glance at Fanning. Then he said:

"Tom was not at home last night."

"Perhaps, inspector," spoke up Fanning, "I can answer that question better than any one else present."

"If you can, do so."

"After I had eaten my dinner last evening, in my own home on Throggs Neck, I lay down and slept for four hours. I woke at midnight, and being in no mood to go to bed I went out with a cigar to stroll around my own grounds. I came upon Tom Kendry, and we went back into my house, where we had a long talk."

"Relative to what? The subject must have been absorbing to keep you talking at that hour."

Fanning smiled. "Midnight is not very late."

"Permit me, inspector," broke in the coroner. "You say, Mr. Fanning, that you found Tom Kendry outside, on your grounds. Is that right?"

"Yes, quite right."

"What was his purpose there? Was he coming to the house to visit you at midnight? Had you made an appointment with him?"

"No appointment, no. And whether he would eventually have come to the house I don't know, and I don't think he did. That was not his primary object in coming to my place."

"What was it?" snapped the inspector like the crack of a whip.

Fanning knew that if he told the truth he would build the foundation for a case against Tom. But with his quick reasoning and rapid method of reaching a decision he knew also that if he did not tell the truth these police officials would eventually learn it, and the case against Tom would be blacker still, and would involve himself.

"I will give you Tom's story just as he gave it to me," he said. "It hinges on the theft of the jewelry from Mr. Kendry's house. Tom insisted that Batterson had some hand in the robbery. I must, in order to give him credit for having some basis for his suspicions, disclose some little private matters of the Kendry household. I first ask pardon of all—Mr. Kendry, Mrs. Kendry, and Miss Kendry."

"For God's sake, Fanning," Mr. Kendry burst out, "if you can say anything that will shed any light on this hideous affair lay bare everything you know. There was never anything shameful in my house."

"We believe that," said the inspector, and all nodded their acquiescence.

Fanning then, with full detail, told of the note he had found under his door, the footsteps Tom had heard in the hall, and the subsequent dismissal by Joyce of the maid, Marie Nicasse. They all listened attentively.

"By the way," remarked the coroner, "Marie Nicasse has claimed Batterson's body, giving her relationship as that of cousin."

"Whether that be so or not," said Mr. Kendry, "it was Batterson who introduced and recommended the woman."

"I believe now, as a spy upon my actions," volunteered Joyce.

"But Mr. Fanning has merely told us preliminaries," said the inspector. "We want to know what took place last night on Throggs Neck. What excuse did Tom Kendry give for being within your grounds at midnight?"

"I will proceed. As I said before, Tom insisted that Batterson had a hand in the robbery, if he did not actually commit it. Marie Nicasse had been in the employ of Miss Kendry long enough to learn the ways of the household, and, of course, the plan of the house. You, yourselves, decided that it was a second story job. Nearly all the upper windows being open it would have been easy to get in by way of porch roofs.

"Tom has been employed by me as timekeeper at the job on Lamartine Avenue. He told me that he had frequently left his place and gone about the Bronx hunting for Batterson, and that he had seen him more than once. Last night he started out for a walk and —"

"That is true, almost immediately after dinner," broke in Joyce. "He told me he would not be out late. He had no intention of remaining away all night."

"That accords with what he told me," continued Fanning. "He must have walked as far as Westchester, however, for he suddenly took a fancy for a trolley ride and boarded a car, regardless of its destination. He had no idea, he said, which way he was going until he found himself passing St. Raymond's Cemetery."

"How does that prove that he walked to Westchester?" asked the inspector.

"He said nothing of changing cars at Westchester. I am merely speaking from my own presumption as to that. But to continue. He got off at the end of the line and walked about, smoking cigarettes. He then sat on a stone wall, and when another car arrived at the terminus he saw Batterson leave it and start down toward my place."

"Why your place, particularly?" asked the captain in command of the Bronx detective force. "The place had been Batterson's home, and he probably had friends on Throggs Neck whom he may have wished to visit."

"True enough," agreed Fanning. "I am not advancing a theory, sir. I am repeating Tom's story to me."

"Yes, yes, I understand that. But we must cover every point."

"Uncover, I should say," observed the inspector with a smile. "Go on, Mr. Fanning."

"Tom told me that Batterson entered my grounds. If he did I can give no reason for it. I saw nothing of Batterson. That is about all I can say except that Tom lay down on the lounge in my dining-room and slept till three o'clock, and then, refusing my offer of a bed, started for home."

"That is, he told you he was starting for home."

"He seemed sincere enough in that. He said he wanted to be in bed when Mr. Kendry rose in the morning."

"That, then, is all you can tell us?" asked the inspector.

"That's all."

For a moment there was silence in the large square room that was ordinarily a cheerful one, but gloomy enough now to the Kendrys.

"Batterson was at your place last night. Kendry's story was true," said the inspector quietly, breaking the silence.

All looked at him inquiringly.

"Had you a report to that effect, inspector?" asked the coroner.

"No. But ever since I went to school I have been able to add two and two together, and invariably find the result to be four. I can, without an eye-witness, finish the story.

"There is no doubt that Tom Kendry saw Batterson go to Fanning's place. There is no doubt that on his way home he saw Batterson again. He followed Batterson to the job on Lamartine Avenue, where he k—where Batterson was killed. Now the question is, what took Batterson, at that hour in the morning, to the job in Lamartine Avenue."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A PUZZLING SIGH.

WHEN the inspector paused there was a general changing of positions. Nobody could tell from the wording of his little speech, or by studying his inscrutable countenance whether the inspector was building up a case against Tom or was seeking some loophole for defense.

Yet his deductions were logical, and no one decried them.

"And why did Tom take off his coat and hang it on a post?" queried the coroner.

"That," said the head of the detective bureau, "would indicate that Tom expected a fight and wanted the freedom of his arms."

"There was no overcoat," put in the captain of the precinct.

"He wore none," explained Fanning.

"But is it determined as a fact that the coat belonged to Tom?" asked some one.

"The coat was Tom's," said Mrs. Kendry, to the surprise of all. "My own opinion is that my son has been killed, and his body taken away. Some one else hung his coat on the post—not Tom."

Joyce turned and looked at her frail little mother with wide open eyes.

Could this be the little woman of headaches and nervous attacks who was talking? Her voice was firmer than her husband's. And her words struck the inspector with enough force to hold his gaze steadily upon her face for the space of half a minute before he spoke.

"That view of the case, I confess, had not occurred to me," he said. "Ask the lieutenant at the desk to step up here."

The lieutenant, closely buttoned in his uniform, responded to the summons.

"Has any report come in regarding that watchman?" asked the inspector.

"Any number of them, sir. That is, presumptively. A bare-headed Italian answering to the description of Gregorio Attula was seen this morning racing like mad toward Yonkers. He was seen by Officer Malloy, on post along Van Cortlandt Park on Broadway. He was seen by trolley motormen and conductors. Malloy saw him from a distance. But he has found a woman name Kline, who lives below the park, who was out early to buy stuff for breakfast, and she says—this is Malloy's report—that the Italian ran into her and spilled a pitcher of milk and almost knocked her down. From what Mrs. Kline told Malloy, the man was running mad and half blind with panic. He was muttering to himself in his own language."

"Bare-headed? There was no watchman's hat or cap found at the place. He must have lost it along the route. That might establish his identity."

"I don't think the hat is necessary. Cardigan, who was on post covering that portion of Lamartine Avenue, has turned in his report, and I was waiting for an opportunity to present it."

"Let us have it at once."

Joyce's bosom fairly heaved with emotions she could not control. She had not seen Cardigan, but for all that Cardigan may have seen the red car.

Would he consider the passage of an automobile at that time an important item to embody in his report. And her red car was known all through the section.

But as the inspector glanced over the report the lieutenant had given him, and did not look in her direction, she began to breathe with greater ease. Cardigan had not been in Lamartine Avenue when the car passed, and there was no mention of the red automobile in his report. This is how it ran:

"At or about quarter past five this morning while patrolling my post I was accosted by a man who had run to me. He was an Italian, who said he was foreman of an excavation gang at the job on Lamartine Avenue known as the Joyce Kendry Orphan Industrial Asylum. The man's name I have subsequently learned is Salvador Riota.

"He informed me that there was a dead man in Mr. Fanning's office at the above mentioned job. I went at once to the place. This office is a temporary structure, a portable house, fitted up as an office, and stands on the curb in front of the property that is being excavated.

"I recognized the body as that of the Thomas Batterson who lost the civil suit brought by Mr. Kendry in favor of Boardman Fanning in the supreme court.

"I at once went to the nearest telephone and notified the station.

"Upon the arrival of the captain I was instructed to obtain all the information possible in the neighborhood. There is only one place within sight of the Lamartine Avenue job that is open at that hour, and that is Massini's saloon, on the first corner to the north. It was there I had done the telephoning.

"Before going back to make any inquiries I made a close examination of the office and its immediate surroundings. Against one side of the portable building there is a desk, built in. This desk is a slanting shelf that runs the entire length of the side wall, and had four drawers. These drawers were all unlocked, and one is marked private.

"The one marked private, and the portion of the desk shelf above it, has been broken by some sort of explosion. Inside the drawer (marked private) I discovered the remains of a wooden box that had had, when whole, a sliding cover. There were wires running from the box, but not attached to anything else. The box was, when whole, I should say about four inches each way—that is, sixteen square inches on every surface, or sixty-four cubic inches.

"Batterson's body lay directly under this drawer, with his feet extended toward the door.

"Outside the door I discovered a piece of rock, a portion of that which is being blasted out, with blood on it, and near that a piece of iron bar one foot and eleven inches long. The broken box and iron bar I turn in with this report.

"I returned to Massini's saloon and asked the bartender (not Massini) if he had heard an explosion. He said he had not. I told him about the discovery of Batterson's body. He (his name is Bass) said that the murder or accident must have occurred while the watchman (Gregorio Attula) was in Massini's drinking. Massini is an Italian name, but the man is an American born citizen, and keeps a respectable place.

"According to Bass, the bartender who opens in the morning, it has been the habit

of the watchman (Attula) to spend half an hour, from five to five thirty, every morning, in Massini's.

"I returned to the scene of the murder (or accident) and made inquiries for the watchman, but he was not to be found. The body, so far as I can learn, was first discovered by Tomasso Gordo, a laborer."

The inspector read Cardigan's report to himself and then aloud.

"This is the most puzzling case of its kind I ever knew," said the inspector. "This watchman's testimony could give us some light, certainly. Of course, according to Cardigan's report the real action of the tragedy may have taken place during the watchman's absence. On the other hand he may, upon his return from Massini's saloon, have discovered Batterson and Tom Kendry, and attacked them both with the iron bar."

"But Kendry was employed on the job," some one objected. "The watchman would not attack him."

"It is possible that Kendry and the watchman have never met."

"That is a plausible theory," said Fanning. "I have never seen that watchman myself. We have nothing to do with him. He is in the employ of the blaster."

"You have no watchman, then?" queried the captain.

"There is nothing to watch as yet except the magazine, and I have nothing to do with that. When we have lumber and brick and trim and interior fitting lying around loose I shall have two watchmen on the job."

There was silence for a full minute. The subject seemed to be exhausted so far as present conditions were concerned.

"Here are some letters," said the inspector, handing a small packet to Mr. Kendry. "They are private letters and in no way connected with the case. Now that Mrs. Kendry has positively identified the coat as her son's, we do not need the letters to prove ownership."

"Was there nothing—"

Fanning got so far and stopped.

"Go on," said the inspector. "What were you about to ask?"

"An unnecessary question. In the course of a business talk I gave Tom a check this morning, and wondered if it had been found in his coat. But I remember now that he folded it up and put it in an upper pocket of his vest. It was a check for business purposes and has nothing to do with this mystery."

"You would be wise to stop payment on that check until we can get something like sense out of the situation," said the inspector. "I don't think we need keep Mr. Kendry and his family any longer. If Tom was not at home all night, and Mr. Fanning's story indicates that he was not, they can do no more for us at present than they have done. We thank you, ladies, and Mr. Kendry, and you, Fanning. Good morning."

Fanning led the way out past the desk, with Joyce. He took hold of her arm in descending the stone steps of the station, and felt her trembling.

"Brace up, dear," he whispered. "Tom is not guilty of murder. We will get things straight after a while."

"But," she answered sharply, turning to look him full in the face, "taking the case against him as it stands, if they found Tom now wouldn't they charge him with murder and arrest him? Think! He followed Batterson to Throggs Neck and back again, according to your story and the inspector's deductions. His coat—and all. Wouldn't he be arrested and locked up?"

"Yes," replied Fanning slowly. "I think he would. He would be arrested and held without bail for further investigation, and then if nothing was discovered to clear him, detained to await the action of the grand jury."

Joyce gave a great sigh, and in Fanning's mind there came a vast wonderment, for the sigh was unmistakably a sigh of content.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### STOCKING UP THE RED CAR.

FANNING'S car had brought them to the station, and was waiting at the curb. It soon had them home again.

Mr. Kendry was too shaken by the multiplying horrors to go down-town. He telephoned that he was ill and lay down on a lounge. Mrs. Kendry, having maintained a remarkable composure during the long ordeal, gave way, and had to be undressed and put to bed by Joyce and Katie.

Fanning, realizing that this was no time to talk of love, or marriage plans, bade them hope, and drove alone to Lamartine Avenue.

It was now the regular dinner hour for the workmen and they were eating, those who had not gone away not expecting to do any work that day. But Fanning gave instructions to begin at one o'clock, and then went to the office.

An officer in uniform sat inside, having borrowed a rear room chair from Massini.

Fanning left his machine in charge of the officer, who knew nothing about the case, but who was there to prevent the disturbance of the office pending further investigation, and walked to the corner. He found Massini himself, an affable man who had nothing Italian about him but his name. The odor of hot soup and other savory foods came from the rear room.

"Would you like a regular dinner, sir?"

"Well," laughed Fanning, "I am hungry, to tell the truth. I ate no breakfast this morning—drank a cup of coffee, that's all, and could eat—but—"

"I understand. Come with me."

He led Fanning to a small, well lighted room just off the bar. This contained a small iron safe, a roll-top desk, a round table and several chairs.

"I know who you are," said Massini, "though you don't do much drinking. This is my office. Here—well, sometimes the boys like a quiet game. Now leave it to me and you won't go away hungry."

Massini was as good as his word. A good dinner, well cooked, seasoned a little highly, but prepared and served with as much care as at a hotel, was soon before Fanning. He did it justice. Having finished, he bought a cigar. Then he and Massini had a drink together, and Fanning proved himself to be as capable of holding down a brass rail with one foot as a harder drinker.

"Where do you live, Mr. Massini?" he asked, when the proprietor had drawn some beer for the back room and the bartender had gone with it.

"I live up-stairs."

"Were you awake this morning about—"

Massini laughed.

"Cardigan asked me those questions. No, I heard nothing. Four, five and six o'clock are a saloon-keeper's paradise. You see, in the early morning the trade is regular. That is, while it is a fairly good trade, it consists of the same people who want their morning eyeopener. There are no groups, and no one is the worse for liquor. A bartender opens up.

"Our busy time is at night. We close at one, and sometimes after locking the doors we sit with a few friends and play a game. It may be two, three, or even four when we get to bed. Then we sleep. So at the time the man Batterson was killed I doubt if a thirteen-inch gun would have disturbed me if it was fired under my window."

Fanning laughed as he paid his bill.

"Well," he said, "I've learned something about running a saloon but not much about Batterson's death. I thank you just the same, however, for your dinner was very good."

"It always is," said Massini. "Come again."

Fanning went back to the job and found the drills at work. The engineer had kept steam up all morning, not knowing when the order would come.

Fanning went over every food of ground, climbed piles of stone, asked where Tom's coat was found, and had the fencepost pointed out to him. But he saw nothing to add to what was already known.

Joyce and her father had lunch together, but Joyce ate little. Neither did Mr. Kendry They did not speak of the tragedy.

"I am going for a drive," Joyce announced when they had finised. "I don't feel like driving myself and will take Wade."

"Very well," replied her father.

So Joyce, in the rear seat of the red car once more on that eventful day, rolled out through the Kendry gateway.

But a strange drive it seemed to be in the beginning.

She went first to a drug-store, where she obtained some courtplaster, linen bandages and a bottle of strong liniment. Then she stopped at a wholesale liquor store and bought a bottle of brandy and two bottles of port wine.

Next she went to a restaurant, where she had some club sandwiches made up, and these, with a large bottle—a thermos she had purchased at the drug-store—filled with hot coffee, also some pickles, cakes, and a few odd selections in the way of dainties, were put into a new willow basket Jimmy Wade had found in a store while she was waiting for the order to be served.

"Now," she said, "for our picnic. We've got to be mighty careful."

"Oh, it's like fooling a blind man," Wade answered, laughing. "Why, it's nothing new for people to eat lunch in Bronx Park. I've seen twenty picnic parties all within sight

of each other. Some choose to eat lunch in the gorge. Some like the high places where the big trees are. The giant sycamore near the Lorillard Mansion is a favorite place. Some eat along the river, others back in the woods. We choose, you and I, to eat on top of a big rock. See?"

He pulled a coil of strong cord from his pocket.

"What's that for?" she asked.

"There is just the possibility that there may really be a hungry bear down that deep hole. And rather than have him come up and bite us we can slyly lower him some grub."

"Jimmy, you are a jewel. I feel that our picnic party will be a success."

"It will, surely. But I must say something. It is not customary for nice young ladies to go on high rocks and eat lunch with their chauffeurs. I can't lift myself to your level, so you must, for the moment, descend to mine. We are a chauffeur and his friend out for a holiday."

"But so many know me, Jimmy," she protested.

"Not many who know you will be walking past the bear den at this hour. And your ten dollar bills in the park man's hands this morning will prevent him or his fellow-workmen from recognizing you."

"From giving us away, you mean."

"Same thing," said Jimmy Wade, and the red car rolled swiftly off on its peculiar errand.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### ON THE POLICE SIDE.

TO return to the police. Soon after the Kendry party had left the Bathgate Avenue station the coroner took his leave. He had his own duties to perform, on different lines, but converging with the police lines upon one point: the question as to how Batterson met his death. But it was none of his affair to find Tom Kendry or Gregorio Attula.

The inspector, the captain of the precinct, and the chief of the Bronx detective bureau were at last alone.

"What do you think now?" asked the inspector, looking directly at the chief of detectives. The captain might answer if he wished.

"My opinion has not changed," said the detective. "The Kendrys, I feel sure, are concealing something even now. It was clear enough in the robbery case."

"But I thought they were particularly frank to-day."

"They had nothing to tell. Fanning was frank enough. But he is safe—out of it. He had no reason to desire Batterson's death."

"That check he said he gave Tom Kendry? Does it lead to any theory in your mind?"

"Not as regards crime," answered the detective. "Fanning has no incentive to commit crime, and every reason in the world to steer clear of it. His record is clean here and in Albany. On the other hand Albany, with a soft snap and big salary, has ruined Tom Kendry. He was a clean, frank, witty young fellow before he went to Albany. He learned bad habits there. Since he lost his job and Fanning gave him that snap in Lamartine Avenue he has been worse.

"He is a spendthrift, a gambler, and a heavy drinker. A man who gets in a hole along those lines will stop at nothing to obtain money. I have an idea that Fanning's check was to get Tom out of some difficulty."

"But—"

The inspector's gaze wandered.

"Did you get the list of stolen articles from the Kendrys?" asked the captain, speaking to the chief detective.

"No. In fact I knew when I left the house I would not get it."

"What made you think that?"

"I didn't say I thought it. I knew it."

"Well, how did you know it?"

"Why, the reluctance of Mr. Kendry to answer the inspector's questions. He, at least, suspected Tom. Mrs. Kendry and the girl, having suffered the greater loss, were excited and eager to have us work. Kendry himself was not."

"That was apparent to me," added the inspector. "But I can't for the life of me discover any proof, nor can I trace any connection between that robbery and Batterson's death."

"I wish that watchman could be found."

"There is an Italian colony in Yonkers."

"Yes, and another in Mount Vernon. But it is almost useless trying to find an Italian among Italians. We all know that well enough."

"Have you given up the search for the stolen jewels?" asked the captain.

"No, certainly not. And that reminds me—the loss must have run well into the thousands. Kendry is a shrewd lawyer, and knows enough to offer a reward. He has not done that, nor has he been near me to ascertain what I have accomplished."

"And what have you accomplished?"

"Nothing. I have had every pawnshop in the city ransacked. Of course a general alarm to other cities would be practically useless without the description of the goods. Nevertheless, one was sent out from headquarters. No such lot of jewelry has been found. Nothing that could be the contents of two jewel-cases has been offered for sale."

"What do you think of the Marie Nicasse theory?"

"Not a great deal without something more to go on. Of course so far we have only Fanning's story of Tom Kendry's opinion. What I'd like would be to have Tom Kendry himself tell the real basis for that opinion."

"Well, let's get back to the Batterson business. How do you account for the box and shattered desk in Cardigan's report?"

"If Kendry killed Batterson with the iron bar the box and shattered desk are relics of some other story and have nothing to do with the case."

"And we've got to wait for the coroner's physician to report before we know whether Batterson was killed by a blow or—blown up."

"Just so."

It was an exasperating case in this, that it seemed so ready to explain itself, and stopped just short of the explanation.

"What do you think of Mrs. Kendry's theory?"

"What theory?"

"Why," said the inspector, who had asked the question, "that Tom has been done away with, body and all."

"The coat would not have been overlooked."

"But would Kendry himself, if he was in a condition to run away, forget his own coat?"

These three police officials, the three highest in the Bronx, were still going over the various complications of the mystery of Batterson's death when a patrolman came up from the desk with a letter for the inspector.

"Just came by post, sir."

"Naturally, since it has a canceled stamp on it," observed the inspector, dryly. "This may—"

He ripped open the envelope and took out a small folded paper.

"Ha! Anonymous, but possibly important," he said. "Listen."

He read aloud as follows:

> About half past five this morning a red car driven by a young woman, with two men on the rear seat, entered the drive into upper Bronx Park, remained there about eight or ten minutes, and came out with the woman and one man on the front seat together. This may mean crime.

"Good Lord, and no signature?" exclaimed the chief detective.

The inspector handed him the note. The captain looked troubled.

"I'd like to punch his head, whoever it was," he said. "But we must take some action on it. Undoubtedly that red car was Joyce Kendry's, the girl who drove was Joyce herself, and the man they left behind was Tom. Now, who was the man who entered the park and came out again with Joyce?"

"The natural supposition would be that the man was Fanning."

"And where did they leave Tom Kendry? This is getting worse and worse."

"Heaven knows, and I'll know before tomorrow night. Good day, gentlemen."

With these words the chief detective walked out of the Bathgate Avenue station.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE CAVE MAN.

THE picnic party of Joyce and Jimmy Wade was a great success.

Perched on the pinnacle of the mass of rock that forms the old bear den in the upper part of Bronx Park they opened the brand new basket Jimmy had purchased. That is, Jimmy did. Joyce, after a keen look around to make sure that all was safe, turned and spoke a few words down into the hole that may or may not have sheltered bears many years ago.

"Are you all right, Tom?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm getting along all right as far as my hurts are concerned. They didn't amount to anything," came the voice of Tom from the bottom. "But I'm not going to stay in this confound hole. I didn't kill Batterson."

"Yes you did, Tom. Your brain is

twisted, and you have forgotten. You had an iron bar in your hand."

"Well—I must say you are a dandy sister, trying to prove I'm a murderer. I tell you I didn't kill Batterson."

"Didn't you hit him?"

"Yes, I hit him, and that made the infernal thing go off."

"Is that what broke the desk?"

"Of course!" snorted Tom, in a rage. "Did you think I kicked it to pieces? Or bit it?"

"Now, look here, Tom," said Joyce. "If you go to getting mad and swearing I'll leave you to your fate. The police *say* you did it. That's the main thing. Even if you were as innocent as the angel Gabriel it wouldn't be safe for you to show yourself now. Would it, Jimmy?"

"Oh, what the devil does Jimmy know? Where's Fanning? He's got all the sense there is in the bunch. Tell Fanning I want to see him. I might better be in a warm, comfortable cell in the Tremont police-station than in this confounded hole. I know them there. They don't eat people."

"The police are terrible," said Jimmy Wade, "when they once get down on you."

"Oh," shouted Tom, in anger and disgust, "you are a chauffeur, and talk like one. If the police are down on you fellows it's your own fault. You make them trouble enough. I have no reason to fear the police. How am I to establish my innocence cooped up in this hole in the ground?"

"It isn't a hole in the ground," retorted Jimmy Wade, with asperity. He did not like Tom's remark about chauffeurs. "It's all above ground. And they've got your coat with letters in it."

"Oh—"

But Tom was choking with rage and could get no farther.

"Here's your grub, Bear," laughed Joyce, lowering the basket, after taking out enough to make a show of eating, and then tying Jimmy Wade's cord to the handle. "And another coat I sneaked from your room. You've got to stay here till they find the watchman."

"What watchman? There wasn't any watchman."

"Yes there was," chirped Jimmy Wade. "He ran away in his bare head. How could he run away if he wasn't there?"

"Say, is that the chump my father hires to run an automobile?" howled Tom. "I wouldn't let him shove a wheelbarrow. I tell you there wasn't any watchman."

"When you and Batterson had your fight," Joyce called down to him, "the watchman was up at Massini's drinking."

"Then what good is he in this business? And why did he run away?"

"That's what the police want to know. You can't come out, Tom, until there is more of a chance."

"But suppose somebody comes and sees me here?"

"Isn't there a niche in the side of the den that will hide you?"

"Oh, there are crevices, and little hiding places. Nothing big enough for me unless I use a compressor to make myself small. And suppose it comes on cold and freezes and snows? I'll die in here."

"Well, there is no sign of that now. It is like summer. You *can't* come out now. I'll tell you what, Tom. You be patient till to-morrow. I'll find out just how things are by to-morrow noon. If they don't look any better I'll take you up to Boardman's place and put you aboard the Sapphire. The captain can go away for a while. If there are new developments that make it safe for you to come out, I'll tell you so. Did you find the liniment and bandages?"

"Oh, I don't want any bandages. I'm all right."

"I say," called Jimmy Wade, who had been quiet too long. "Can't you burrow under the leaves down there and hide?"

"I'll hide you if I climb up there."

"Don't be ungrateful, Tom. Jimmy has been a big help to me."

"Me also," mumbled Tom. "I'm going to eat. I'm half starved."

"That's a good sign," said Jimmy. "We'd better be going, Miss Kendry."

He helped her down, after they had bidden Tom good-by, and admonished him to keep out of sight, and in another minute the red car was rolling out of the park.

Left alone, Tom ate his lunch in peace, but kept up a grumbling within himself at the preposterous position he was in.

"Hang it," he muttered, "even if I did kill Batterson, every hour I hide away makes it worse."

But, as he grew cooler in mind, he began to find some sense in what Joyce and Jimmy Wade had said.

He, and he alone, knew what had taken place in that little portable office. If the police had his coat, and had deduced from

any facts whatever, the theory that he had struck Batterson with an iron bar, the case did look black.

He could not, even in his coolest moments, imagine what the watchman had to do with it. If he had run away it had been to save his own skin from punishment for being absent from the job. The watchman was not in the office, nor within sight, when the blow that killed Batterson was struck.

After thinking these things over, and having finished his meal, he crouched on a jutting piece of rock and looked at the basket.

"The crazy loons forgot the basket," he said. "Well, they can buy another to-morrow. This looks new."

Again reflecting upon the wisdom of the warnings Joyce had given him, he began searching the circular wall of the bear den for a hiding place. Into every crevice and hole he thrust his hand, regardless of the possibility that although they certainly contained no bears, they might harbor snakes or 'possums or sleepy squirrels that bite furiously when roused.

"This cave man business," he grumbled, "isn't what it's cracked up to be. I suppose I ought to sneak out and hit Kitty with a club and drag her in here. But there are certain objections."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### A STARTLING ANSWER.

AT one o'clock on the afternoon following, the inspector of the 7th Inspection District sat at his telephone. He would listen to a verbal report wired in by one of his staff in citizen's clothes, and, with a grim smile fixed upon his lips would jot down some lines on a pad that lay before him.

"So!" he ejaculated, after the third report had come over the wire. "It's the girl who is playing the game, after all."

Then, in reply to this third message, he sent back to his detective, "Don't lose sight of the red car. If the girl goes to her brother, bring in the lot."

This done, he telephoned to the desk sergeant down-stairs:

"When Mangin brings in Tom Kendry and his sister, send them right up here."

Following the receipt of the anonymous note the inspector had moved with alacrity. And when she had eaten her lunch with her mother, Joyce repeated her shopping excursion of the day before.

She sat, as she had then, in the rear seat, and Jimmy Wade drove the car. At the restaurant the same man took her order, and thought strange things in his head not only when the order of the day before was repeated, but when Jimmy Wade came in with another new basket which he had been compelled to buy because they had left the first one in the bear den.

Having seen the good food packed in the basket Jimmy got into his place, and Joyce into hers, and the red car moved.

It was about forty minutes afterwards when the desk lieutenant in the Bathgate Avenue station heard a car outside, and in another moment Officers Mangin and Delehanty came in with three prisoners.

One prisoner was Tom Kendry, looking wrathful and red. Another was Joyce. The third was Jimmy Wade, who had been compelled to drive the entire party in the red car from the bear den to the station-house.

"Here we are, lieutenant," announced Officer Mangin.

Mangin carried a brand new willow basket in his right hand, while his left rested on Tom's right shoulder. Detective Delehanty carried a brand new willow basket in his left hand, while his right hand kept a grip on Tom's left arm.

A desk lieutenant is an individual absolutely without any outward show of emotion. Nevertheless, this one stood up behind the desk and stared.

"Go right up to the inspector," he said. "He expected you. The captain is there."

So, past the desk and up the stairs the two detectives led their captives. Thus far not one of them had spoken a word within the terrifying precincts of the Temple of Law and Order.

On the way up-stairs Joyce breathed out:

"This is awful! This will kill mama and drive papa crazy."

The inspector and captain looked at the three prisoners with a keen scrutiny, but, with the exception of Tom, not without kindliness.

"You have done a good day's work, Mangin and Delehanty," said the inspector. "Where did you find Kendry?"

"He was hiding in the old rock called the bear den in the upper end of Bronx Park. And we've done a better day's work than you think, sir."

The inspector musingly looked at Tom,

then at Joyce, next at Jimmy Wade. Then he permitted his gaze to rest on the two willow baskets that had been placed side by side in front of him.

"H-m," he began. "I don't know that I'm ignorant of it all. You've got the man suspected of killing Batterson, his sister who aided and abetted him in hiding away from justice, and the chauffeur who drove her car and was in the confidence of both. A good day's work."

"Yes, sir; thank you," replied Mangin. "And we have also arrested the man who stole the jewelry from Mr. Kendry's house, and we have recovered the stolen goods."

"What!"

"The thief stands before you, sir. And that job in his father's house was not his only job."

Having made this damning statement against Tom, Mangin took the cover from one of the baskets. It contained, besides two jewel-cases, several watches, and a heterogeneous collection of diamond rings, pins, necklaces, lavallières, embracing every known precious gem that is used for women's ornamentation.

The two police officials and the officers who chanced to be in the room stared in fascination at the glowing mass.

"You made quite a haul while it lasted," said the inspector, glowering at Tom.

"I didn't steal a thing in that basket."

"Tom didn't steal a thing in that basket," echoed Joyce. "He can explain how he got them."

"He didn't steal a single thing," vociferated Jimmy Wade, and for the ninth time since he had arrested the three Mangin told Jimmy to shut up.

"You are in a bad fix, Kendry," said the captain. "It's a shame. And your father so well known and liked."

"Look here, I didn't steal any of these things," declared Tom. "Am I going to have a chance or not?"

"Yes, you shall have your chance. We have no ill will toward you, but duty is duty, and the duty of the police is sometimes the most unpleasant of all. Now, we know that you spent night before last, up to three o'clock, with Fanning in his house on Throggs Neck. You told Fanning that you had followed Batterson there. Inasmuch as your coat was found near the scene of Batterson's death, we will accept the statement as truth. Did you follow Batterson from Throggs Neck?"

"In a way, I did. I wasn't always following him, but sometimes was ahead of him. I saw Batterson waiting for a car. For some reason or other two cars came to Eastchester Road together. Batterson got on one and I got on the other, and we reached Westchester Square at almost the same time.

"I hired a chauffeur to take me home. I didn't want Batterson to see me. Batterson waited for the Tremont car. The automobile stalled twice, and the car passed me. The last stop of the auto was at Echo Park, and I walked the rest of the way home. I saw Batterson standing in front of our house looking up at my sister's windows."

"That," said Joyce, "is true. I saw Batterson myself, and I also saw Tom."

"You didn't go inside your house?" asked the inspector.

"No. I followed Batterson."

"Did you kill Batterson?"

"Yes."

A dead silence fell upon the room.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### A STORY THAT REQUIRES CORROBORATION.

"GO back to that portion of your story that deals with Throggs Neck," said the inspector, when he had recovered his voice. "Did Batterson go near Fanning's house?"

"I lost Batterson among the trees on Fanning's place. There is no doubt that Batterson went there to kill Fanning. But Fanning came out of his house and walked around in the moonlight. Batterson is a coward. Knowing of a former attempt that Batterson had made on Fanning's life, by hiring a fool sailor on his yacht to kill him, I knew the fellow meant no good.

"Just after he had left our house he stopped under an electric light and examined something he took from his pocket."

"I saw him do that from my window," corroborated Joyce.

"I had a suspicion that he was going to the Lamartine Avenue job, and kept on his trail. Sometimes he would get way ahead of me, when I had to hide in shadow, but we reached the job nearly at the same time. And he went straight for the office which had been put in place the day before. For some reason the keys had not arrived, and the drawers and door had been left un-

locked. But there was nothing there, so that did not matter.

"As Batterson got near the office I saw that he carried something in his hand. I knew that he meant mischief, probably to Fanning. And I knew there was going to be a fight between Batterson and me right there. I always hated the man, but of course had no thought of murder."

"Yet you murdered him."

"No, I did not," said Tom calmly.

"Your statements are contradictory," came back the inspector. "Didn't you say a few minutes ago that you killed Batterson?"

"I *killed* Batterson, but I did not murder him."

"There may be a distinction. Go on. Tell us what happened. Did you see the watchman on the job?"

"I saw nobody but Batterson. Batterson was a bigger and stronger man than I, and I had no doubt but that he was armed. I was not. I took off my coat and hung it on a fence-post. Then I found an iron bar.

"By this time Batterson was inside the office. I went in. He had a little object in his hand that he was trying to fix inside the first drawer to the right. There were four drawers. It was pretty dark inside, and he struck a match. I heard him mutter to himself, 'If I can't get him one way I will another.'

"He took something from his pocket, I think it was a screw-eye. He undoubtedly intended to affix the box in Fanning's private drawer so that when Fanning pulled it open he would be killed.

"In my own excitement I made a noise, and Batterson turned. When he saw me he made a move with his right hand toward his hip-pocket, and in his left he held the box. I thought he was going to shoot. I shouted: 'You scoundrel! You can't do murder here!' and I struck the box with my iron bar.

"There was a blinding flash. If there was any loud noise I didn't hear it, for I was instantly knocked out. That's all I know till I came to my senses in my sister's car in Bronx Park.

"She told me I had killed Batterson. My brain was too numb to know anything, and I did just what she and Wade, the chauffeur, told me to do. They helped me up the rock and down into the old bear den and left me there.

"When they brought me food yesterday they convinced me that it would be wiser for me to remain in hiding for a day or two until the watchman was found, or some evidence that would clear me. The watchman had nothing to do with Batterson's death, and I had no idea I was going to kill him and knock myself stiff when I hit the box. My intention was merely to knock it out of his hand.

"After my sister and Wade left me yesterday I began examining the crevices and holes in the wall of the bear den to see if I could loosen a piece of rock and make a hiding place. To my amazement I discovered all this loot hidden in a deep hole. There is a roundish hole in the rock, and then a pocket that sinks down. At the bottom of that all this stolen property was hidden.

"To-day my sister and Wade came to bring me food, and we were all arrested. That's my story."

"And *quite* a story. It requires, however, some corroboration.

"Perhaps Miss Kendry has something she could tell," suggested the captain.

"Miss Kendry?"

"There is nothing I can add to my brother's statement," said Joyce, "except that I, and not he, am responsible for his retirement to the bear den.

"Night before last I did not sleep, because I was anxious about him. I went to his room several times, only to find that he was not there. In the morning just at dawn I looked out of my window and saw Batterson. When Batterson went away I saw Tom.

"It was clear enough to my mind that Batterson was going to Lamartine Avenue and that Tom was following him. I feared trouble. I dressed and went to the garage to get out my car. I wanted to go alone. But I made noise enough to wake Jimmy Wade, so I took him with me.

"When we got to the job on Lamartine Avenue we found Tom unconscious and Batterson dead. Wade went to Massini's and got a bottle of brandy. We got Tom into the car and took him to the bear den. By the time we got there he was able to help himself. We got him up the rock and down into the den. You know the rest. He could not have had any jewelry with him then. In our excitement we did not notice that he had on no coat."

"Have you Fanning's check in your pocket?" suddenly asked the inspector of Tom.

"I have," was the prompt answer, as Tom took the folded check from his vest.

"Truth sticks out in all these stories," said the captain. "There are no conflicting statements anywhere."

"But these," added the inspector, pointing to the pile of stolen jewelry.

"Look here," blurted out Tom. "I'm no thief. I don't blame you so very much for suspecting me of stealing in my own home, although the thought is horrible. But I'd got in with a bad crowd and laid myself open to suspicion. I look upon the fault there as my own. But let me explain just how that suspicion became fixed upon me.

"On the night of the robbery I came home about one o'clock from some social gathering. I did not go to bed at once, but took off my coat and sat at my window smoking a cigarette. I heard soft, stealthy footsteps. On two previous occasions I had heard the same thing. This, the third time, I decided was the time to investigate.

"I went as quietly as I could to all the rooms. I must have alarmed the intruders, for I saw no one. While I was in the room occupied by my father and mother I saw my father move. Undoubtedly he was awake and saw me.

"My cuff-link dropped from my shirt-sleeve and was found by my mother the next morning. I had no idea that I was suspected of the theft until Fanning told me at his own house. It almost broke my heart. I could have stolen from my own home, but I could not have stolen all this other stuff. Now, my impression is—"

"We know your impression. We heard it from Fanning. We would like to hear something of it from you."

"Then don't stop me. Batterson, as a rich man, was a veneered rascal. I knew that. I never liked the man. Batterson without a dollar to his name was an active rascal. He placed Marie Nicasse in our house. I am sure that between them they managed that robbery. It was no more strange for Batterson to think of the bear den as a hiding place for stolen jewels than for Joyce to think of it as a hiding place for me. I am telling the truth. Arrest Marie Nicasse. Deprived of Batterson's support and backing, she will break down and give the whole thing away."

"You, however," was the retort to this, "must go below and wait for the report of the coroner and the solution of the problem presented by these jewels. Miss Kendry and Wade will make their complete statements to my stenographer, and then may go. Mangin, take Kendry down."

Tom spent that night in a cell.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### WHAT MARIE TOLD.

ON Park Avenue, just north of Tremont, John Graham has his splendid funeral parlors. Here lay the body of Batterson, ready for burial. The coroner and his physician had done their work and Mr. Graham had done his.

It goes without saying that Batterson would be buried without a great deal of ceremony. In fact, it would have been a question whether he could have had a decent burial at all had it not been for Fanning.

Fanning had become acquainted with John Graham, and the acquaintance had ripened into friendship. Fanning had said:

"Let him have what money will procure. We can't give him back his life."

So the man Batterson intended to kill paid for his casket and a grave in Woodlawn Cemetery.

Two men who were not mourners attended the short service. They accompanied the small cortege to Woodlawn. They stood together while the casket, in its outer box, was lowered into the newly dug grave.

But at no time did they pay any attention to the business of burying Batterson. They kept their furtive glances upon a small, dark woman, who was the only mourner.

These two men had come in their own coach, hired from Graham. When the last shovelful of earth had been placed, and the workmen began rounding up the mound, these men stepped to the side of the small dark woman.

"Marie Nicasse," said Mangin, in a low voice.

"My name, sir," she answered.

"You will please ride in our coach."

"But I am with friends, *monsieur*."

"Your friends may follow and join you at the Tremont police station."

"My God! What is it? What have I done?"

"The inspector wants to see you about Batterson's death."

"But, *monsieur*, I know nothing about it

except that he was murdered by that rascal Tom Kendry."

"That's just it. The inspector wants to hear you say it."

"I will see that he and his miserable sister have the punishment."

"Of course. And if what you say is true the inspector will help you see it."

"I will accompany *monsieur*."

Willing enough, if she could have revenge on the family she hated, Marie Nicasse spoke to her friends, telling them to follow her, and stand by her at the police-station. She then got into the coach with Mangin and Delehanty.

It is a sad commentary upon human friendships that her companions did not go near the Tremont police-station. Marie Nicasse, fresh from the scene of Batterson's burial, with her nerves in a most unfit condition to maintain calmness, found herself facing the inspector and captain, the coroner and the chief of the detective bureau, alone.

"Marie Nicasse," began the inspector, "we have a few questions to ask you."

"*Monsieur*, you may ask. I do not know how my cousin met his death."

"*Was* Batterson your cousin?"

"He was my cousin—what you call—second cousin—on his mother's side."

"Very well. That is a mere detail of no importance."

"I did not kill my cousin, *Monsieur Commissaire*."

"No, that is not what we wanted you for. Bring out those—"

The pile of stolen jewelry was replaced before the inspector. Marie Nicasse went whiter than she had been before.

"You found them!" she screamed.

The inspector smiled blandly.

"They were found," he said, "else they would not be here. Now, Marie Nicasse, were you ever in prison?"

"No, *monsieur*."

"It is not nice—to be in prison."

"Horrible, *monsieur*."

"Just so. Now, Marie Nicasse, was it you or Batterson who suggested the old bear den in the big rock as a good hiding place for the stuff you stole?"

"I spoke of it—oh, but we did not steal, *monsieur*."

"It will be better for you, Marie Nicasse, to tell the truth."

The woman was almost fainting.

One of the favorite tricks of the Parisian police is to reconstruct a crime in the presence of the person suspected of having committed it. There is something in the Latin character that renders one of that blood incapable of viewing with composure any scene, or any result, of a crime he has committed.

Marie Nicasse was staring at the glittering jewels with eyes that fairly blazed. But it was with the fascination of horror that is said to hold the victim of a snake that charms before it kills.

"Marie Nicasse, tell us how you entered Mr. Kendry's house the night you stole—this watch, this jewel-case. *This* jewel-case. Be careful to tell the truth."

"We—oh!"

She almost fell. Mangin caught her, and seated her in a chair.

"Did you enter an upper window by way of the porch roof?"

"No, *monsieur*. We—that is I—went in with a key."

"A key?"

"Yes. It was my—the key I had used. I did not return it when Mademoiselle Kendry sent me away. The lock is a spring lock. There is no key in the lock inside. I had no difficulty."

"You are doing splendidly. Go right on and tell us how you got into the rooms."

"I walked in, *monsieur*. I was accustomed to walking about the house at night and making no noise. My cousin waited for me outside. He was to whistle if he became alarmed. I had plenty of time before I heard the low, soft whistle. I was in Mademoiselle Kendry's room when it came. He was just under her window. It is a front room.

"That rascal Tom Kendry had come home. But I had already taken the watch and *madame's* jewel-case. I took *mademoiselle's* jewel-case and made my escape. I handed all to my cousin. He said he would take care of them.

"But we did not know such a terrible time would be made. We were watching. Such a regiment of police, *monsieur*, for one poor little theft! And we were afraid. I told my cousin that the old bear den would be a good hiding place for all—for the jewels, until it blew over. He hid them there."

"We know these things belong to the Kendrys. You will tell us where you stole the rest of the stuff."

"Oh, but the people will flock, *monsieur*,

when it is known that the police have recovered such a mass of stolen property. Is it not so?"

"I suppose it is," said the inspector. "Mangin, take her down."

Between them, Mangin and Delehanty had almost to carry the forlorn creature to a cell.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### AFTER STORM THE SUNSHINE.

THE Kendry home was a place of much sorrow. Again Mr. Kendry was compelled by illness to remain away from his office and the courts before which he had cases pending. Again Mrs. Kendry was forced to take to her bed suffering from a headache such as she had never had before. Joyce, though not ill, was pale and very quiet.

Fanning was there, and as the den was not needed by Mr. Kendry, who had gone to sleep on the lounge, he took Joyce in there.

"Now, look here," he said, in his masterful way, placing her in a chair and sitting down by her side, "all this talk about delay is nonsense. To-morrow we'll go and get the license. The County Clerk is not so far. And either your car or mine will annihilate the distance."

"But, Boardman, how can I—now? Tom is still behind bars—"

"Oh, no, Tom isn't behind bars at all. Tom won't be behind bars at any time. He is held for the final result of the investigation, which means the coroner's report. I have seen the inspector, and from him received a very comfortable idea of Tom's position. You see, all statements tallied so well that the police look upon the case favorably.

"The Sapphire is waiting. Naturally, after having undergone so much that was painful, you do not care for a large wedding party. I never did care for one. We will be married quietly. We will go aboard the Sapphire and sail south. We will visit the Bermudas and the Bahamas and the Caribbean Sea. You will get back all your old time cheerfulness."

"But—how can I leave mama? She needs—"

Fanning interrupted her with a laugh.

"My dear, you haven't given me a chance to outline our full plans. The Sapphire is quite a roomy boat. There is, next to the main saloon, a large and luxurious stateroom, as you know. It is as fine as the one commonly known as the owner's, which the owner seldom occupies. I have had it in my mind to suggest that your father and mother renew their youth and enjoy a second honeymoon with us. Both need such a rest and health giving trip."

"Boardman!" she cried, putting her hand in his. "Was there ever so kind a man as you?"

"I know of one—your father."

"But can Tom be left alone—even if he is set free? Isn't there danger that old habits and associations will draw him back?"

"No. I am not afraid of Tom now. I am going to load Tom up with such stupendous responsibilities that he will not have time for old or new associations."

"You are going to put him in charge of the job?"

"I am not. I chanced to find a partnership in the firm of Carton and Company, importers of silk. That, you will remember, was my grandfather's business. Carton and Company are my grandfather's successors. The business is a good one, but the firm has suffered a temporary embarrassment, the same as all importing firms, on account of the European mix-up.

"They have large assets, but needed some cash. I had the cash. I put it into the concern. I am not a dealer in silk. I don't know silk from fine linen. But I had the cash, and you had Tom, and you and I had each other. So the partnership in Carton and Company is there waiting for Tom to step into it."

"Boardman!" She put her arms around his neck, laid her lovely head on his shoulder, and cried. But it was not in sorrow.

"I was coming along Tremont Avenue to-day," he went on, in a casual, easy manner, "and Wartell's window reminded me of something that a man who handles flagstones, paving stones, and brick, and cement, is liable to forget. I stepped inside and we will see how it fits."

He disengaged her left hand and slipped a fiery solitaire ring on the third finger."

"Boardman!" She flung the arm back and kissed him.

"And now I want a plain gold ring. To-morrow we will get the license."

"Oh, I beg—I did not know my room was so well adapted to—young people—"

Mr. Kendry stood in the doorway smiling. It was a wan face he carried, but he was trying bravely to hide his troubles.

"Papa, look!" She showed him the ring.

"Very pretty. That's more than your mother got when she promised to marry me."

"You have made up for it since, papa."

"Well, well, a man—ah? Headache better, my dear?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Kendry, who had quietly joined them. "But the heartache remains. I must go and see Tom. Is he still in the Tremont station?"

"I believe not," answered Fanning. "I believe they keep pris—people in cells only over night. He is—but we will find him. I will go with you—and Joyce."

"He has bought Tom a partnership in his grandfather's old business—the succeeding firm, I mean," said Joyce. "And see, mama." She held out her left hand.

Tears sparkled on Mrs. Kendry's lashes as she kissed Fanning.

"My second son," she murmured.

"And what do you think? He wants to get—he wants our—"

"The lady is timid and embarrassed," struck in Fanning. "What she is trying to tell you is that we are to be married at once, without any fuss. Then we four, we four who occupy this room, will sail southward, Joyce and I for our first, and you two for your second honeymoon."

"Great guns, was ever there such a man?" exclaimed Mr. Kendry. "The Sapphire in the ruby Caribbean, Mrs. Kendry, and you and I—"

"What's the family conclave?" shouted the voice of Tom. "Am I in on it?"

"Tom!" cried Mrs. Kendry as he strained her to his breast and showered kisses upon her pale cheeks.

"And dad, good old dad! Did he think his bad boy was worse than he was?"

"Never mind that. What has happened?" said Fanning commandingly.

"This, for one thing," replied Tom. "Dad, your watch. Mother, your jewelry. Joyce, yours." He handed to each the articles he mentioned.

"You have been discharged?"

"They arrested Marie Nicasse at Batterson's funeral. She confessed. She and Batterson, down and out, entered upon a career of appropriating what didn't belong to them. The coroner reported that Batterson came to his death from a piece of iron driven by the explosion of the wooden box into his temple. At the autopsy no wound made by a blow was found."

"What will they do with Marie Nicasse?"

"Bury her. She committed suicide."

There was much more to be said, repeated, and repeated again. Then Joyce told Tom of Fanning's purchase of the partnership. The two old chums clasped hands.

"And look," Joyce said, holding out her hand.

Tom stared, then laughed, then started out.

"Where are you going now?" asked Joyce nervously. There was a glitter in Tom's eyes.

"I'm going to see Kitty. I'm going to follow master. Board, has Wartell got another one like that?"

"Several," answered Fanning, laughing.

Tom rushed out, slamming the door behind him. Relief had come. Everybody laughed, and happiness returned to the Kendry home.

THE END.

## A MODERN RONDEAU

THE tango teas delight Jeannette:
Each afternoon on festive toe
She dances gaily to and fro.
Her frock—*charmeuse* or *marquisette*
In tones of peach or violet,
Rejoices all the folk who go
To tango teas.

Her lattice-slippered feet are set
Upon my heart, she well must know,
Nor treads a whit more softly so.
But—who can blame her, or forget
The tango tease?

*Ethel M. Coleman.*

# Marianna Goes to Sleep

by Frank Condon

I.

I TOLD this story to Martin the other day, and he immediately protested. I have known Martin a long time, and whenever he protests I harken unto him with respect.

"It seems to me," he said gloomily, "you have too many people in it. There's Marianna herself, and Helen Rhodes, and Rex Oliver, and Oscar Peabody, and Horace Forsman, and the man who insulted Marianna, and President Higgins of the Iron Company—why, you've got enough there for a novel!"

"That's all right," I argued. "I can get 'em all in."

"I don't believe you can," he went on firmly.

"I can," I said.

"You cannot," said Martin.

"I'll show you," I retorted airily, and then I went away, determined to tell the precise truth about Marianna within reasonable confines and to omit no salient detail; resolved to chronicle all the activities of that one evening and to insert in their proper places the various persons concerned. Judge the result for yourself.

Marianna—her entire name was Marianna Adelaide Isabel Glover—went to work for the Higgins Iron Company on the fifteenth of November in a clerical and highly unimportant position. Her salary was nine dollars a week, and the offices were located on the ninth floor, which seems a reasonable coincidence.

Perhaps it is fortunate for Marianna that the offices were not on the first floor or in the basement.

Marianna was nineteen years old, and Nature had ordained that her hair be fiery red and inclined to curl at the slightest encouragement. She was pretty and small—the kind of girl you often see skittering in and out of business offices carrying business-like papers and wearing an air of preternatural importance.

Marianna had a number of things that you expect a New York girl to have—a frowzy room-mate named Helen Rhodes, who suffered from chronic neuralgia, and a sweetheart named Louis, who worked in a movie palace, and with whom Marianna quarreled on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Marianna and Helen slept in the same bed when Helen's neuralgia permitted slumber. Their room had a meretricious fireplace, into which you could throw the silver foil wrappings from bars of chocolate. You could not, of course, build a fire in the fireplace because you would instantly set the house in a blaze.

Furthermore, the room had a closet for dresses and hats, a shelf to hold Helen's neuralgia medicines and a rickety table on which were two tin savings banks with cash register attachments, into which you placed nickels and dimes.

Marianna's bank had $6.15 and Helen's $14.70 when this story began. Both banks have more now, but that has nothing to do with it.

On the eighth floor of the Todd Building, directly below the Higgins Iron Company, was the office of the Peabody Debenture and Bond Company, Mr. Oscar Peabody, president and main official.

A few words will be wasted on Mr. Peabody at this point, not because he is in any way worth them, but because he intrudes and must be handled. He was crooked and successful. His Debenture and Bond Company was crooked and partly successful.

Through it he sold shares in mythical enterprises to persons who could not afford to be swindled, which is the class that always *is* swindled.

The police had been watching Mr. Peabody with growing interest for some time, but as yet had made no movement in his direction. The detectives knew that he was operating an illegitimate business, but were awaiting certain proofs.

Even the U. S. Government had manifested an unfriendly interest. It was only a question of time with Mr. Peabody. The curtain was coming down on him, but he still lingered over his gilded nest, a fluttering vulture of greed.

And on the second floor of the Todd Building Mr. Rex Oliver, of Oliver & Henson, architects, had his private office.

Mr. Oliver was an excellent architect, but a small and mild-mannered man, in constant fear of offending his wife. It may appear to the impatient reader that this narrative is simply a directory of the Todd Building, but such is not the case. There are many other occupants in the Todd Building, and not one of them will be even mentioned.

In the offices of the Higgins Iron Company no one paid the slightest attention to Marianna, although the head bookkeeper remarked to the cashier that the new girl was nifty to look at. Marianna scurried through her day's work and went home to Helen and the neuralgia, a trifling and insignificant molecule, a business atom, withal a red-haired and very likable young atom.

She was in great fear of President Higgins of the Iron Company, and dodged into doorways when she saw him coming. He wore stern and unyielding whiskers, and Marianna was constantly in terror of men who wore whiskers.

It was on the eighth floor that Mr. Peabody of the Bond Company first discovered Marianna. She was hurrying, after having wasted fifteen minutes powdering her immature nose, and she did not see Peabody.

He surveyed her with a vulpine smile. He watched her flutter up the stairs. Later on he saw her a number of times in the lower corridor, and each time he made a fresh resolution.

He must know her. Being a decisive individual, he spoke to Forsman about it. Forsman was his first mate and willing slave, having been kept out of jail by Peabody at least five times.

"Certainly I know who you mean," Forsman grinned. "Red hair—trim figure—always laughing. She's a bird. What'll I do?"

"Get her," Peabody ordered. "Frame up some way to make her acquaintance. Then introduce me."

"Cinch," Forsman replied. "Take a few days, but I'll deliver the goods, neatly wrapped and addressed."

There are a number of ways by which you may meet a young woman in New York City, if you are unable to become an acquaintance through formal introduction. Mr. Forsman thought for a moment and determined upon a very ancient method.

And thus it was that Marianna was disturbed. She was even frightened for a moment, though the sun was shining and plenty of people were about, though at a distance. The hour was five-thirty. Marianna was walking home to Helen Rhodes, whose neuralgia was worse than ever.

The incident occurred on Central Park West, where the walk runs along with the park wall. A strange young man caught up with Marianna and began to talk to her.

He said: "Hello, kid, why are you in such a hurry?" and a number of other original things. Marianna hurried on.

She perceived that the man had been drinking, because he lurched. He also leered at her. He was not a nice man at all, and she had about decided to run.

Then the man caught her arm and forced her over toward the park wall. Marianna's heart was beating a thousand a minute, and when she tried to cry out her voice failed. She began to sob.

"You're a nice little girl," the man was saying, when some one's fist caught him on the jaw and he went down on his back.

He lay there, groveling and swearing.

Then he staggered to his feet, shook his fist at somebody and took himself off.

A pleasant voice sounded in Marianna's ear and she suddenly beheld her rescuer. He had removed his hat and was bowing.

It was Mr. Forsman, of course. And, of course, the man he had struck was his confederate. The game is not new.

"Thank you," Marianna said, when she could speak.

"Glad to be of service," Forsman replied. "It's got so it isn't safe for a girl to walk alone. It's a disgraceful reflection upon the police of New York. But it's all over and there's nothing to worry about while I'm with you. Let's move on before a crowd gathers."

Simple, wasn't it?

And then Mr. Forsman escorted Marianna to her very door in order that she might recover from her fright and escape the importunities of possible mashers.

The following evening Mr. Forsman met her quite by chance, of course, and they became better acquainted.

It happened that Marianna and Louis were not speaking for the time being. A slight lover's quarrel, or lovers' quarrel, existed and separated them. Louis had sworn never to speak another word to Marianna until she took back what she had said about him; and Marianna had vowed that the stars would fall out of their orbits before she would beg any man's pardon. So the trouble brewed.

Naturally it would be patched up, but that takes time. Meanwhile Louis went morosely about his work at the movie emporium, and Marianna reflected that Louis was a stubborn brute.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," Forsman said to her on Thursday evening. "I know a funny little restaurant down in Washington Square called the Spanish Oven. You'll see all sorts of queer people—actors and artists and—and poets reciting their works. Wouldn't you like to go there and eat? It's great fun just to watch the people."

"Sure I would," Marianna answered. "When?"

"How about to-morrow night?"

"It suits me," she smiled.

Thus was arranged the little party, at which Mr. Oscar Peabody would come into the picture. He would be wandering by in his automobile. He would drop in.

Forsman would express surprise and pleasure and introduce him to Marianna; and perhaps Forsman would receive an urgent telephone call or a message taking him away. That was the arrangement.

Of course, if Louis had not quarreled with her, Marianna never would have thought of going to dine at the Spanish Oven with Mr. Forsman. But she was a trifle defiant of Louis, who, of course, knew nothing about it.

And that Thursday evening, Helen Rhodes came home to the lodging house with an attack of neuralgia—a very severe attack, even for Helen Rhodes.

Marianna spent an unpleasant night, ministering to the wants of the invalid, bringing her hot water bags and soothing her fevered brow. In the morning, Helen was much better, but Marianna was a wreck, for lack of sleep.

She wandered off to work, dreary of countenance. She kept her eyes open during the day only by violent attention to them, and some time during mid-afternoon she recalled that she was going to meet Mr. Forsman at thirty minutes after six.

She remembered that she was invited to the Spanish Oven and that she would have to eat and laugh and talk in payment for her dinner. Marianna groaned at the thought of trying to keep awake during what might be a long evening.

She could not telephone Forsman, because she did not know where to telephone. She was to meet him in the lobby of an uptown hotel, on the minute; and she must keep her engagement.

Fifteen minutes before five, which was the hour of closing for the Higgins Iron Company, Marianna was attacked by a sudden and brilliant thought, which plunged into her sleepy head and roused her for the moment.

In the office of President Higgins, down the corridor, she had seen a huge, soft-looking couch of black leather, with cushions in the corners. From five to six, why should she not rest?

Mr. Higgins, whiskers and all, would have decamped. The entire office force would have gone. All would be sweet silence and peace and she could semi-slumber until six o'clock, gathering fresh energy for the festival at the Spanish Oven.

At five minutes past five, Marianna, wearing her hat and street-coat, was in full possession of the private office of President Higgins of the Iron Company. She investigated the big couch and found it full of

soft, springy bumps. It gave gently beneath her when she sat down. There is no doubt about it. It was a fine couch and admirably adapted to the needs of a weary girl.

Marianna removed her hat and jacket and placed them carefully upon a chair. She decided to rest until five minutes of six.

At first she determined not to really sleep at all, but to merely repose drowsily, with her eyes half open. Then she determined actually to sleep. But this would mean that she would have to wake up at six. She would get the telephone operator to call her at that hour.

She argued this point at great length, stretched out upon Mr. Higgins's comfortable couch. . . . And when she opened her eyes, with a start, a near-by clock was banging nine o'clock at night.

Nine o'clock! Marianna, horrified, skipped across the room and stared at the tower clock. It announced that nine o'clock had passed an instant before.

"Oh!" Marianna exclaimed, and for some time she said nothing additional.

Then she remembered about five things, all at once.

She recalled that in the Todd Building the elevators ceased running after seven in the evening. She remembered the engagement with Mr. Forsman at the up-town point. She remembered reading a story once about a girl who was caught in an office building one night and died of fright or something else before she could be rescued.

Fearfully and hurriedly, Marianna donned hat and jacket and rushed for the door through which she had entered. It was locked. A quick, frightened sob escaped her.

She bounded to the door at the right, which opened into the general offices. That, also, was locked. There were four doors in the private office. Marianna tried them all.

"My goodness!" she whispered to the earless walls. "I'm locked in and it's after nine o'clock. What on earth shall I do?"

She dashed to the telephone on Mr. Higgins's desk and rattled it violently. The 'phone was dead. Its other end connected with the switchboard in the outer office, from which the operator had long since fled.

Marianna thought of shouting. In fact, she shouted. But she knew that nothing would result. She opened a window and looked forth upon a shimmering city of night. She could not see the street or the back yards below, because a mass of wall jutted out underneath the windows.

She sat down upon the couch and gave herself up to frightened meditation.

Helen Rhodes would spend the night worrying if she did not return. In fact, Helen, being an excitable girl, would telephone the police and state that some one had abducted Marianna Glover.

Furthermore, Marianna was afraid to remain in a deserted and darkened building. That thought urged her to try the electric light. She found a lamp and to her joy it switched on.

But she was little relieved. She knew that if she had to remain all night, she would not sleep a wink.

Whereupon, Marianna cried softly there in Mr. Higgins's office and wished she had gone home at five o'clock. . . .

When you are locked in a deserted office building at night, with no telephone, no elevator service and no possibility of shouting your way to freedom, what do you do? Marianna thought hard. She remembered reading something about such a case. . . .

Why, of course! You write a message on a bit of paper and hurl it out of the window, trusting to luck.

In one corner of the private office, a typewriter gleamed. Marianna had learned a little about writing on such a machine. She found a sheet of paper and began to write rescue notes.

She determined to write a number of them, because a breeze was blowing outside the Todd Building—a stiff breeze of unquestionable carrying power.

She sat down, inserted a sheet in the machine and began to wonder how one writes a note pleading for rescue. First she clicked off: "Please rescue a girl who is locked up in Room 967, Todd Building."

That seemed definite, but cold. So Marianna placed another sheet in readiness and wrote: "I am Marianna Glover. I am now locked up in Room 967, Todd Building. Please come and let me out. You will have to walk up, because the elevator is not running."

As she typed she became interested in seeing in how many different ways she could describe her predicament. She wrote brief messages, such as: "Help. Come at once. I am locked in Room 967, Todd Building."

And she wrote longer notes, thus: "Marianna Glover, an employee of the Higgins

Iron Company, is accidentally locked up in Room 967, Todd Building. Whoever finds this note, please come at once and let me out. Much obliged. Marianna Glover."

When she finished a neat little pile of variously worded appeals lay beside the typewriter, and then Marianna hunted diligently through drawers until she found a ball of white string.

Now you cannot throw a bit of typed paper from a ninth floor window in a strong breeze and expect it to land anywhere near your building, unless you weight it with some moderately heavy object. Marianna found such objects.

She prowled about until she had several boxes of matches, a number of lead pencils, three pen-holders, a bundle of pipe-cleaners, which Mr. Higgins undoubtedly would miss in the morning; two ancient and obese cigars and the wooden top to an ink bottle.

To each of these she carefully attached a written appeal, and then she opened the window and prepared for action.

## II.

In the mean time we must glance casually into the turbulent affairs of Mr. Rex Oliver, of the architectural firm of Oliver & Henson, on the second floor of the Todd Building. At the moment, Mr. Oliver's affairs were in a deuce of a state and all on account of Mr. Oliver's wife, Jessica.

Mrs. Oliver, it may be stated, was no longer in New York, having departed at an early hour in the morning for the State of Maine, to open the Oliver cottage at Pine Needles. Mr. Oliver had stayed behind and had balled matters up, as usual when left without the guiding hand of his spouse.

It was about the brown box, with the iron handles. Before she left, Mrs. Oliver had given Rex definite, detailed and formidable instructions.

"Take it down to the safe deposit vaults the very first thing you do this morning," she had said to her husband, standing at the gate which opens into the train-shed. "Don't let anything interfere with that. You know yourself how forgetful you are. And you know that if anything happened to it—well!"

"My dear," Rex assured her, as he handed her over to the railway porter, "have not the slightest worry about the box. I shall take it to the vaults instantly."

The brown box contained the Oliver family jewels, the Oliver bonds, the Oliver stocks and some of Mrs. Oliver's most precious personal possessions, besides papers of import. It was the sort of box that really needed the convoy of mounted police.

And to make it short, Mr. Rex Oliver met a man on Forty-Second Street who talked about a bungalow in Westchester, and totally forgot all about the safe deposit vaults until very late Friday afternoon. Whereupon he went off into a cold sweat.

He called upon Heaven to witness that he had meant to take the brown box down to the vaults. He shivered with fear that something might happen to it.

He refused to take it to the Oliver home on upper Broadway, because the servants were gone and burglars had been roaming through the neighborhood of late. If that brown box were stolen—if anything happened to its contents, Mr. Rex Oliver might just as well find a soft spot in the Hudson River and leap in with a sad cry.

Life would be of no further use to him. He shivered and cursed his forgetfulness.

And so, as night came on apace Mr. Oliver determined to rid himself of his precious incubus.

He telephoned to his friend Sickles, manager of the Van Hammond Hotel, which is large, expensive and equipped with private vaults for the benefit of guests.

"This is Oliver," Rex said over the telephone. "I am down in my office, 206 Todd Building, and I have a very valuable box with me. I want you to keep it all night in your safety vaults. Will you send one of your trucks for it?"

"Glad to oblige a friend," Mr. Sickles replied. "What time shall I send for it?"

"Any time from now on," answered Oliver. "I'll wait here until your truck comes. I'll be looking out of the window, so have him blow his horn."

"I'll hurry him up," said the hotel manager, and then Mr. Oliver prepared to wait in some impatience.

Night was coming rapidly on. Hotel automobile trucks are uncertain in their movements and are very busy vehicles, and the hours wore on, while Mr. Oliver waited.

The brown box reposed beside Rex's desk. Rex reposed uncomfortably on a chair and glanced nervously at the increasing darkness. Try as he would, he could not prevent his mind from running on burglars and similar unpleasant topics.

Thus we find, at nine o'clock Friday night, Mr. Rex Oliver, nervous, unhappy

and slightly frightened, guarding his treasure trove in the deserted offices of Oliver & Henson. He walked about bemoaning his fate and lamenting the fact that he had not kept his promise to his wife.

He thought of ghosts and hobgoblins and remembered stories of men unaccountably found dead in their very offices, with not a sign to indicate the murderer. Mr. Oliver was, as stated, a frightfully nervous citizen and given to sudden jumpings.

And then, in the midst of his mental alarms, he heard a sudden, suspicious sound. He saw suspicious movements. He beheld shadowy, creeping figures that were not figments of his imagination.

His ears tingled and his heart started to pound at a rate that no regular heart can stand for long.

On the street, half a block distant from the Todd Building, something sharply struck the hat brim of a young man who had been peacefully walking along. It startled him. He stooped down and picked up a mangled cigar, to which was attached a typed note.

The note read: "A very frightened young lady named Marianna Glover is now locked up hopelessly in Room 967, Todd Building. Will the finder of this appeal hurry to her rescue? Thanks."

The young man turned and sped toward the Todd Building.

In the Venus Rose Gardens another man, gloomy and alone, quaffed a tall glass of coffee and stared down moodily at the little blue table before him. The Gardens were almost deserted.

The solitary man was meditating that sometimes a person can be very lonely and blue in New York and that life is ghastly unentertaining to those who are desolate.

He glowered at a stray waiter. He thought of his happy boyhood days. And then he heard a sharp, hissing sound. He started in his chair.

From the heavens above something flashed and struck. When the man looked again, he beheld a pen-holder quivering in the exact center of the blue table, in which the pen had imbedded its point.

Fastened to the pen-holder was a bit of typed paper. The morose one grasped it and read:

"For heaven's sake, come and rescue me. I am locked in Room 967, Todd Building, and can't get out. I am frantic. Make haste. Marianna Glover."

The man gave a sudden exclamation. He shouted for his waiter. He grasped his hat and cane. He paid his bill. He hurried from the deserted Gardens, followed by the amazed stare of the waiter.

A young man waiting on a street corner for his dilatory sweetheart saw the wooden top of an ink bottle fall suddenly at his feet. Something white fluttered about its neck. He picked up the thing and read:

"Will you who finds this please come at once and let me out of Room 967, Todd Building, in which I am locked up, unable to escape. Hurry; I am frightened. Marianna Glover."

In that very instant the young man, already irritated by his lady's carelessness, forgot her. He jammed his hat upon his head and hurried excitedly toward the Todd Building, looming dark and forbidding in the night sky. Certainly, Adventure was afoot this pleasant eve.

A young and romantic night-watchman in a half-completed structure down the street heard something rattling sharply against the iron girders over his head. It banged from side to side as it descended.

It fell at the night-watchman's feet as he sat by his red lantern and when he picked it up he saw that it was a bruised box of matches, to which was tied a *billet-doux*. The b. d. said: "Hurry to my rescue. I am locked et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Yours truly, Marianna Glover."

The night-watchman rose to his feet. The spirit of romance and adventure swelled within him. He remarked to himself that the half-finished building could go hang itself, as far as he was concerned.

He was going to leave it flat and rescue a damsel in distress; which he did, without further delay.

So it went. Old men and young men; fat men and lean men; men of prosaic minds; men of a spiritual turn, with a leaning toward sweet sentiment; in fact, quite a number of different kinds of men found Marianna's appeals and started at once to rescue her.

When you come to think of it, what is more natural? Where, in the whole world, stands the man who can suddenly come upon an appeal from an unknown maiden asking him to rescue her and hold aloof? Where is the man who can resist such a cry of distress, when, perhaps, the damsel is beauteous?

There is the element of romance and uncertainty. The girl may fall in love with her rescuer. You can see how it is.

Suppose you, yourself, walking along in the night, found Marianna's mournful appeal, skittering through the air to your feet? I ask you, if you are not a married man and thus a hardened creature, what would you have done?

True, some of the appeals landed upon rocky soil, as it were, and bore no fruit. A commuter, for instance, hurrying to the train for Metuchen, N. J., read one of the notes, cast it aside with a scornful air and strode on, impervious. But commuters are not wholly human beings.

Other messages fell upon fertile ground and instantly, in some chivalrous bosom, a heart began to beat in sympathy and a new-made knight started for the rescue, ready to storm castle walls, batter down the drawbridge, swim the moat and perform sundry deeds of heroism, as might be required.

You cannot get in the Todd Building at night for the simple reason that its doors are locked against such persons as you. If you are an office occupant, you have a night-key which opens a small side door.

The young man who had found the mangled cigar betook himself to the rear of the Todd Building, climbed a low fence, crossed a yard with a tree in it and began to make his way up a slanting grating, constructed of heavy wire cables and iron bars.

Another man tried the Todd front entrance, found it locked and essayed to climb up the side of the structure by means of a ladder he discovered in another yard. A third man started up the rain-spout, determined to break a window somewhere.

Still another fought his way upward against the warm side of the smoke-stack from the boiler room. Each rescuer, knowing nothing of other rescuers, decided that the glory would be his personally. He wanted to save the girl and see her weep grateful tears and perhaps throw her arms about him and call him her preserver.

And thus in the course of time, the Todd Building, silent within, became a place of siege, a modern business fortress, standing out against a creeping, crawling, breath-holding army of silent invaders.

About that time Mr. Rex Oliver looked forth tremblingly into the darkness, cursed the lagging van man from the Van Hammond Hotel and beheld mysterious figures.

He thought of the brown box with the iron handles and its precious contents. He thought of his wife and his future, in case burglars despoiled the box.

He shivered, leaped into the air, as he beheld a black shape approaching along a ledge, opened a window and emitted a shrill cry of horror.

"Police!" remarked Mr. Oliver at the very top of his thin voice. He added such words as "Help!" "Fire," "Murder" and other expletives that seemed to him appropriate at the moment.

Down in the street below, a thoughtful citizen heard the cry for aid and immediately stopped. Other citizens gathered round the first one and discussed the strange noise coming from a darkened building.

A policeman wandered by. Mr. Oliver renewed his yells for help and the policeman, being of a prudent nature, went to telephone for reserves.

The crowd swelled. Men and boys came on the run and presently, the brave lads in blue galloped into the scene.

"I tell you, somebody is being murdered," argued the first citizen.

"That's right," said another. "I heard the moans of the victim when I first came up. Maybe a number are murdered."

"No, the building's haunted. It's a ghost," observed an impressionable young man, on his way home from a music lesson.

"It's a fire I tell you," argued some one else at the edge.

"Fire!" cried a man on the outskirts and an excitable citizen promptly smashed a glass box and sent in the alarm.

"Why don't you break in?" demanded a tax-payer of the police, who were examining the Todd Building with calm and studious eyes. "You might save somebody?"

"Can't break into a building without a warrant," answered the police officer in charge. "Against the law. Now where did you hear the yells coming from?"

"It's an anarchist plot!" roared a fat man in a silk hat. "These bomb-throwers will have to be suppressed. Call out the reserves and surround the building."

"Ain't you going to do anything but stand here?" demanded the irate citizen who had been arguing with the police. "While you wait, valuable lives are being sacrificed."

"Get the women and children out first," pleaded an alcoholic person who had just

arrived and was under an entirely mistaken impression.

And about that time, the janitor of the Todd Building, who had been peacefully asleep for the past two hours before the boiler fires, suddenly awakened and heard the noise of many voices.

He came out through the narrow side opening and stared about him in amazement. Instantly, the police, followed by citizens descended upon him and demanded to know what in blazes had happened.

III.

Now observe the workings of Artemus P. Fate, the well-known shaper of our destinies. . . . Earlier in the same evening a superior officer at detective headquarters had said to Plain Clothes Officer Kimball:

"Drop in to-morrow and bring that Peabody person down here. We'll have the papers signed before noon."

"Very well," responded Officer Kimball.

But on the morrow, there would be no Oscar Peabody in the Todd Building and no Peabody Debenture & Bond Company, for the very good reason that Mr. Peabody had seen sudden signs of writing upon the wall some time Friday afternoon.

In the offices of the Peabody swindle concern stood a large, conspicuous and imposing safe, and within its iron arms reposed a small fortune—ready money that rightfully belonged to washer-women, dry goods clerks, struggling artisans, waitresses in cheap restaurants, street-car men, seamstresses and others who had been duped by Peabody crooked advertisements.

"It is time," remarked Mr. Peabody to himself on Friday afternoon and smiling at the thought of his pre-knowledge, "to go away from here."

He bought railway tickets, packed his grips and proceeded to forget that he had an engagement at the Spanish Oven that evening to meet a red-haired and attractive girl. More important than that was the business of saving his worthless hide.

He desired urgently to leave New York City while the leaving was unimpeded. But first he must transfer the money in the big safe to his grips.

Wherefore, while Marianna Glover wrote her typed notes and while Mr. Rex Oliver shivered and guarded his brown box with the iron handles on the second floor, Mr. Peabody slunk into the Todd Building, using his night key, and climbed through the darkness to the eighth floor, where he opened his store of ill-gotten wealth and began piling packages of small bills into his suit-cases.

And presently Mr. Peabody looked up in alarm. He heard the tramp of boots and the coarse muttering of voices. The noise grew louder. Many feet were scraping along the passages of the Todd Building. Orders were being shouted. Peabody turned off his lights.

At the back and sides police officers were arresting chivalrous youths, each of whom protested indignantly. Each assured the officer that he was an honest young man endeavoring to rescue a beleaguered girl in Room 967, and in proof of his statement brought forth his typed missive.

The police snorted incredulously.

"Come on up to this Room 967," commanded a lieutenant, impressed by the array of notes.

In his experience with burglars, they did not operate in this open fashion, and they did not attack a building in such great numbers. He was puzzled. But he was even more puzzled when, accompanied by the would-be rescuers and by a cordon of police and the Todd janitor, he finally broke into Room 967. It was completely empty.

"Now," said the lieutenant, triumphantly, "where's the girl?"

"She's gone," murmured a rescuer, waving his slip.

"Look at this," shouted another of the accused knights.

He pointed to the open typewriter, to the sheets of paper and to a half-finished note. "Don't this prove it? Look at the open window, too. She has released herself."

On the eighth floor police were passing through the corridor, and among them was Mr. Officer Kimball of the plain clothes squad.

"Say," shouted somebody. "There was a light in that office when I first passed by here."

"Where?" Kimball demanded, halting.

"Right there."

He pointed to the door of Peabody's office. Kimball tried it. He looked at the name. An officer cracked the glass with his club at Kimball's direction, and when the light broke in it revealed Mr. Oscar Peabody, red-handed, guilty and stuttering, surrounded by his suit-cases and his stolen wealth.

Mr. Kimball wandered in and stared him in the eye.

"Well, well," said the detective cheerfully; "going away, hey? And not forgetting to take the loot along. I suppose I'll have to ruin the rest of your evening, Mr. Peabody, but the fact is, we'd like to have a long chat with you at police headquarters. And we'll take this swag with us."

Whereupon Oscar Peabody collapsed and submitted to the chill embrace of chain wristlets. Officer Kimball smiled at his own good luck. In the morning his bird would have flown.

The hopeful rescuers of Marianna Glover were herded together and taken away for inspection at headquarters—not that their story was not believed, but on general principles. Thus did knighthood get itself into trouble, which is ever its fate.

Later they were all released, with police advice to refrain from rescuing strange damsels in distress.

On the second floor Mr. Rex Oliver was calmed down by the sudden appearance of six policemen in uniform. He explained himself and his box, and the police sneered at him and accused him of needlessly making trouble.

About the middle of the conference the man from the Van Hammond Hotel walked in and desired to know where the box was. Mr. Oliver embraced him.

"I've heard of a lot of things," remarked a cop sourly, "but these goings on beat me. A lot of maniacs trying to rescue a girl that don't exist and a little beetle yelling his head off over a box. This building is full of nuts, if you ask me."

And thirty minutes before all this excitement Miss Marianna Glover, pacing restlessly to and fro, waiting for rescue, tried the doors of Mr. Higgins's office all over.

It must have been that her initial and frightened efforts were careless or else she had neglected to twist the little iron dewdad under the knob of the door leading into the rear hall; for, when she tried to unlock it the second time, she found that by twisting both the lock and the knob at the same time, she could open the door. Which she did with a cry of joy.

Without waiting another instant, forgetting that perhaps brave men were hurrying to her aid, she bolted into the back hall, made her way down nine flights of steps and slipped through the rear entrance of the building, which is where the janitor and the coal come in and which can be opened from the inside, but not from the outside.

"Thank Heaven," Marianna breathed fervently. "I thought I was locked up for the whole night."

She looked at her wrist watch. It was getting late. She thought of her engagement with Forsman without the slightest regret. What was Forsman to her, anyhow? Did she not have a sweetheart of her own? This brought Marianna to thoughts of Louis and of the rather shabby way she had treated him.

It would be nice, she reflected, to drop in at Louis's movie palace and surprise him. Yes, she would forgive him, because now she was happy and wished Louis to be also.

Marianna hurried off into the darkness about the time the Todd Building began to seethe in real earnest.

Louis was coming out of his movie emporium, wearing a glum face, as Marianna appeared.

"Hello," Louis said, as though he were not amazed.

"Hello, Louis," Marianna answered shyly. "Where you going?"

"I thought I'd come and call on you, Louis."

"Going to be friends with me again?"

Marianna nodded brightly. Louis kissed her. He reflected. As a motorman, on his off-days, seeks pleasure in riding with a motorman who is not off duty, Louis, the movie-man, now thought of pleasure and, naturally, of movies.

"I know where there's a picture show that runs until midnight," he said to Marianna. "Say we go there."

"Fine," murmured Marianna, pressing her lover's arm. "Wait till I tell you what happened to me to-night, Louis."

She did so, as they set off, side by side.

And Mr. Oscar Peabody, struck by the blind thrust of Fate, as stated, went on down to police headquarters with Officer Kimball and was locked up, charged with sufficient crimes to keep him in jail for lo, these many days.

Had he only refrained from speaking to Forsman about the red-haired girl, the red-haired girl would have gone on home to Helen and the neuralgia at five and—but why speculate? He got what was coming to him.

The whole thing goes to show that you cannot monkey with a New York working girl.

# The Star of Adventure

by Perley Poore Sheehan

## A Story of Royalty, War and Love

### CHAPTER I.

IN THE LIGHT OF DAWN.

FROM the fading, mottled darkness there came an occasional sigh of escaping steam, the rattle of a donkey engine, the mounting chorus as mules and men both raised their voices to high heaven in complaint and expostulation. New Orleans—or, at least, the New Orleans of the water-front—was stirring from its brief and troubled slumber.

The thrill of it all reached Chanler Knowlton where he slept. He awoke. His senses took note of the tepid heat of a Southern morning in late May. The warmth was perfumed with a smell of hay. Then he remembered where he was, and the memory thrilled him so that he sat up.

The hay-shed where he found himself appeared only a little less vast than it had in the darkness of the previous evening when he had crawled into it. The baled hay which had been his bed filled it almost to the roof.

But it wasn't the strangeness of his surroundings that thrilled Knowlton as much as it was the simple fact that this was dawn, and that the whole world and all of his new life lay ahead of him.

As he looked out through the open side of the shed toward the east he felt again, stronger than ever, the rousing impulse that had finally started him on his way. There was the old Mississippi which, ever since he could remember, had coaxed him to follow. Like the Mississippi, he also would reach the ocean, let the broad currents of the ocean sweep him where they would.

The Mississippi had always been a mother to him, terrible at times, always mysterious, yet an encourager of dreams.

Fifty miles to the north lay Bayou Lafarge, where he had been born twenty-three years ago, and where he had lived ever since until two days before. Thus far Mother Mississippi had borne him on her bosom.

It had been in his own skiff. Then he had sold his skiff to a man for ten dollars. He had come to the place where skiffs ended and great ships began.

Knowlton's meditations were suddenly interrupted by a sound of nearer speech than the voices that had thus far reached him from the water-front. Two men were drawing near.

They were speaking French. That was the fact that quickened his attention. For, even before he could distinctly catch what was being said his quick hearing had told him that this was neither the Creole *patois* of Bayou Lafarge, which had been his own intimate language since babyhood, nor was it the degenerate French of New Orleans.

At least one of the speakers was using the sort of French that Knowlton's own conservative old grandmother had taught him.

Knowlton crawled to the edge of the hay and looked over.

The speakers had entered the shed, were

rapidly approaching, and that first glimpse increased his curiosity.

There were just two of them, as he had already guessed. One was huge and burly. The other was much slighter, inclined to elegance, a youth of about Knowlton's own age.

There was something about the appearance of the larger of the two men which immediately struck Knowlton as furtive, murderous. But the younger of the two seemed to have no suspicions.

He was walking with a quick and nimble tread. His voice was cheerful.

"We'll have to hurry, or we'll lose the ship."

"We still have plenty of time."

"To tell you the truth, Coupeau, I never thought that you were one to interest yourself in an unfortunate. Where is this sick friend of ours?"

Instead of answering the question, Coupeau—the larger of the two—cast a final glance over his shoulder. Then he put out a detaining hand. They had come to a point directly under the place where Knowlton lay.

"Where is that star?" the big man asked.

The younger one had turned, swiftly on his guard.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"I mean, Monsieur Regard, exactly what I say. I saw you looking at that star last night in the hold of the ship. Suppose you let me have a look at it, too."

"So that is why you brought me here! So there isn't any sick Frenchman needing our help!"

"No; but there will be one if you don't do what I say."

"I'm going back to the ship."

"Don't try it or I'll knock you cold. Let me see that star. Do you suppose that I followed you here all the way from Mexico merely for the fun of it? I saw it in Progreso, and that time also you thought that you were unobserved.

"Diamonds!—it was covered with diamonds; and you were no more anxious then than you are right now to fall into the hands of the police. That is what I've had in my thoughts.

"Why does a gentleman with a diamond star try to avoid the attention of the police, knock about in all sorts of places? Evidently, because the star is not his. And, since the star is not his, it might as well be mine. Let me look at it."

"Coupeau, you are preparing trouble for both of us. I tell you, quite politely, that you can go to the devil."

The youth called Regard was tremulous with suppressed excitement, but if he was frightened he gave no sign of it. Knowlton at his observation post, felt a wave of sympathy for him.

There was no mistaking his look of quality and breeding, yet both he and the other man were roughly dressed. It was odd to hear these two men under a hay-shed on the New Orleans water-front talking about a mysterious star.

The word kept recurring in their quickening speech. At each mention of it there appeared a flash of fire, as if from the star itself, in the face of the younger man. As for the elder, he mentioned it with increasing greed and brutality.

"Are you going to let me see it?"

"No."

"Give it to me or I'll smash you."

"Let me pass."

What followed came so swiftly that it was as much a surprise to Knowlton as it must have been to the youth down below. Without warning, the man called Coupeau lunged forward with his ponderous fists.

The other was no match for him. Moreover, he was cornered. Coupeau had backed him up against the wall of hay.

Yet, notwithstanding the double disadvantage from which he suffered, the youth Regard made an admirable display of skill and courage. But it was like a fox-terrier fighting a bulldog.

There was an interval, all too brief, of scuffling conflict, and then the larger of the two men landed a blow that sent his adversary reeling.

Knowlton had heard and seen enough. That talk of a mysterious star had lifted the fight above the level of an ordinary brawl. Besides, this was robbery. Not only that, but some instinct was bidding Knowlton act.

"Wait," he cried in French.

The youth looked up. Coupeau took advantage of the diversion to strike again.

There seemed to have been no lapse of time at all as Knowlton came tumbling from his shelf of hay. He had landed on his feet, but crouching, his right hand against the ground.

He glanced up. There was the young Frenchman still reeling back, doing his best to keep his feet. There was the man who

had struck him, a specter of dynamic brutality.

It was from the ground that Knowlton started his own right fist in an upward swing and a blow into which he was to put every single ounce of strength he possessed.

Knowlton had never really hit a man before in his life. Boxing had never been a popular sport among the Creole boys, but, of a sudden, it was as if Chanler had discovered himself possessed of some knowledge inherited from that father of his—a father he had never seen, but who, according to the family tradition, had come like a blond god out of the North.

The blow had far to go. The whole accumulated force of it would be at full momentum by the time it arrived. Already it was rushing upward like the lunging flight of a comet.

So sudden had been the arrival of this new element in the dispute that Coupeau had not yet recovered himself any more than his victim had. To Knowlton there came that flash of fierce joy that comes to every marksman when he knows that his shot is going home.

There followed a shocking impact. For the fraction of a second Knowlton might have been trying to hold up one of those hay-bales at arm's length. Then Coupeau dropped.

Knowlton turned. He was almost as dazed as if he himself had been struck.

"Bravo!" came a gasp from the young Frenchman.

He staggered near. He was still supporting himself by a hand against the hay. He was looking at the American through the dim light with an expression of mingled awe and delight.

"He was trying to rob you," said Knowlton.

"Yes. You saved me."

"Trying to rob you of a star. What is it?"

"*Monsieur,*" said the Frenchman, "you have a right to ask; but, alas, I cannot answer you. Permit me! I am not even free to tell you my right name. Therefore I shall introduce myself under the name I have been using for the past year. It is not Paul Regard who thanks you, but that is the name he bears."

Knowlton was smiling at this whimsical speech. He put out his hand. The young Frenchman seized it.

They were about of the same size, as well as of the same age; but Knowlton was rather the larger of the two, and dark, with something of romantic beauty about his sober face. The Frenchman was blue-eyed, yellow-haired, with a look of speculative calm back of his surface exuberance.

"Enchanted," said Knowlton, in the fluent, beautifully modulated French his Creole grandmother had taught him. "I am M. Knowlton — Chanler Knowlton, of Bayou Lafarge. There, they call me Chan, for short. I lived there all my life. So did all my people before me—all except my father, who was an American of the North. But my people are Creole—French. My mother was a Lafarge."

"We are brothers," cried Regard, with a little laugh. "How does it happen that you're here so opportunely?"

"Simply because," returned Chanler; "I had started out to see the world, didn't have very much money and chose this place as my bedroom."

Even while they were speaking they were leaning over the still form of the man on the ground.

The blow had been a clean knockout. He had lain where he dropped for the length of time that a referee, had there been one, might have taken to count ten.

He now began to move and mumbled a curse. At the same moment, there came from the water-front a louder rush of steam which gradually transformed itself into the sobbing roar of a ship's siren.

The sound brought a look of consternation to the younger Frenchman's face. He was shouting, but his voice was barely audible.

"My ship! She's pulling out! Do you want to come?"

"Yes!" Chan howled.

"It will be hard," clamored Paul Regard into his ear.

"No matter!"

Knowlton heard himself hurling these answers into the air like a man in a frenzy. He was speaking to a man whom, a quarter of an hour ago, he had never seen, whose real name, even now, he did not know.

Out there along the quay there was a ship outward bound for an unknown destination. Yet both this man and this ship were calling to him, and out of his heart he had already answered them. For were these not the emissaries of Mother Mississippi?

Those last words of his were still on his lips as he and the young Frenchman began to run.

## CHAPTER II.

### MULES AND MYSTERY.

THE Frenchman began to laugh.

"This is great," he said. "You knock out a member of the crew. Presto! You jump to take his place."

Knowlton did not laugh. They were making speed across an area of granite paving-blocks, slippery with the precipitated fog of the night. In and out among lumbering trucks and mounds of bales and boxes covered with tarpaulins they took their way. A voice in the American's heart was clamoring that his great adventure had begun.

He gave a wild look ahead. He saw a final casting off of hawsers. The ship was already in motion, backing out in a cloud of her own steam. It looked as if the race had been lost after all.

Just under the overhanging bows they came to a panting halt. But the Frenchman let out a piercing hail.

There was a moment of suspense.

From the misty mid-distance back of them there came another shout. Knowlton turned to see, plunging toward them, the big man he had knocked out in the hay-shed. Then there suddenly appeared an automobile which was at strange variance with the other wheeled traffic on the quays at that time of day.

It was a purple touring-car driven by a liveried chauffeur. On the back seat were two men in evening-dress. Their attention was also riveted on the departing ship. They were gesticulating wildly.

Then, over the ship's rail there leaned a man who wore a soiled jersey and was badly in need of a barber. He had heard the Frenchman's hail.

He grinned and disappeared. A second later a rope snaked overboard and fell coiling to the wharf.

"For you," panted Knowlton, motioning to the young Frenchman.

Even then he had a sort of sickening pang that his adventure was ended.

"It's for both of us," cried Paul Regard. "You first!"

The ship was gathering momentum. There had been a perceptible increase in the width of water between hull and wharf in even those few moments. There was no time for ceremonial politeness. The ship's siren was again sobbing forth.

To this mighty music Chan caught the rope. He pawed at it hand over hand until it tightened and held. His feet and his knees came against the painted plates that had been buffeted by all the waves of the Seven Seas.

He swarmed up. Rough but friendly hands snatched him over the rim of the ship, and he fell sprawling to the deck.

Knowlton saw a look of amazement on the bearded face of the man in the jersey. Then both of them were at the ship's rail helping Paul Regard aboard.

The three of them looked back.

The man called Coupeau hurtled out to the water's edge. They had the satisfaction of jeering at him as he shook his fist and bellowed insults. Then the touring car came racing out. From it leaped the two men in evening dress. There were other details about them to suggest that they had been up all night.

What they said when they saw the ship backing out into the river and already beyond their reach was inaudible, but their faces, like Coupeau's, indicated rage and despair.

Knowlton turned to speak to Paul Regard, but the young Frenchman had suddenly crouched to keep himself out of sight.

The ship was sliding rapidly toward midstream, coughing her warning to all smaller craft that her voyage was begun and that nothing could stop her now.

In that first dizzy survey of his as he came tumbling over the side Knowlton had got some idea of the other men who were to be his companions on this cruise of his into the unknown. Had this been a pirate ship the crew would have been in keeping—white and black, roughly dressed, ill favored.

Only a few of them appeared to be sailors, even to Knowlton's inexperienced eyes. Most of them were apparently finding their surroundings as strange as he was himself. They looked like tramps. At best they might have been the canvasmen of a wandering circus.

What was going to become of him in such surroundings and with such companions as these? And what was that educated and mysterious young Frenchman, Paul Regard, doing in such a crew?

There came a lull in the shaking vibration of the steamer's siren as the ship, headed out, found her pathway clear. Then, through the comparative silence, there came a sound that smote Knowlton to the heart. It was as if he had heard the voice of a friend.

Up from the hold of the ship there had come the disconsolate hee-haw of an unhappy mule.

So much had been made clear to him at any rate. This was a mule-ship. These were the mule-tenders whom he had seen. A mule-tender he himself had become. The certainty of it brought him a touch of relief.

He never could have posed as a sailor, not by any possible stretch of will power or imagination. But he had been more or less familiar with mules all his life.

So Mother Mississippi hadn't misled him, after all. She had taken him by the hand. She had led him to the one ship of all the ships at her front door on which he might make shift to work, and, working, cover the next stage of the uncharted road that lay ahead of him.

"What will they say when they find that I don't belong on board?" he asked, as he found Paul Regard once more at his side.

"They won't find it out," answered Regard. "No questions asked. That's the rule on a boat like this."

He laughed briefly.

"You heard that mule. There'd be a lot of questions asked if any of those mules had been shifted about—if there should be one missing or if there should be one too many. But men! Bah! Two or three more or less! A trifle! There's your answer, my friend, so far as you are concerned.

"And listen! It may be an answer to other things. Once an old general—one of the greatest France has ever had—told me to keep an eye on the mule market for signs of a rising storm."

"What sort of a storm?"

Paul Regard did not answer immediately. He looked Knowlton in the eyes with a little smile. His answer came as lightly and pleasantly as if he had been speaking about the weather, but it was a word that gave Knowlton a jolt of incredulous surprise.

"War!"

It was a word associated in Knowlton's mind with only one conflict. All his father's people had fought for the North. All his mother's people had fought for the South. That was "*the* war." It seemed impossible that there should ever be another one.

He said so.

But Paul Regard's blue eyes were twinkling with strange fire.

"That's why I am going back to France," he said softly. "That's why I'm taking the risk of arrest, if not of continued exile. Ah, I've already taken some risks, great ones, but there has always been that one great adventure ahead."

"But surely," Knowlton cried, "a single load of mules doesn't mean that there is going to be a war."

"No! It was *this* that tells me that something is brewing."

Paul Regard had put his hand on his heart.

"And now then," came a snarling shout, "all you jockeys lay below—smart, now!—and look out for them Mauds!"

## CHAPTER III.

### A MESSAGE BY WIRELESS.

IT was almost like going to sea in a stable. The vast hold extended about them like a dim and gently rocking grotto in which the herded mules had sought shelter from an earthquake.

To feed them and water them, to help them up when they fell, to separate them when they got tangled up together—all this at the risk of getting kicked to death—these were the duties of that new world in which Knowlton found himself.

The ship was American, her name the Choctaw. She was bound for Santander. Mules were her principal, if not her only, cargo.

So much, at any rate, Chan had picked up in the first few hours of tumult and confusion.

There was plenty to do. The old Choctaw slipped down through the waters of the delta and out through the southwest passage, while the mule-tenders were still sweating over their new tasks in the cavernous hold.

It was almost night, nothing in view but the deserted wastes of the Gulf of Mexico, when Knowlton and his French friend had a chance to come up on deck again.

"We dine," said Regard.

Each man had received a tin plate filled with an appetizing stew of meat and vegetables, a tin cup of coffee, a hunk of bread.

They were happily ignorant of the fact that as long as they remained on the old Choctaw this would continue to be their fare, morning, noon, and night, with a steady and alarmingly rapid descent in the quality of it.

They ate on deck. Before they had finished, the great stars were quivering into blue magnificence, brilliant and tender. The waters of the gulf flowed with a movement so soothing that even they appeared to be under some sort of a spell.

The Choctaw's smoke drifted lazily toward the north. The dim masts seemed scarcely to move against the sliding background of the sky.

Then from a sort of chart-room just aft of the Choctaw's bridge, and almost directly over the place where Knowlton and his French friend sat, there came the long, sputtering chatter of the wireless. It was the one note of mystery that had been lacking.

So it seemed to Knowlton, as soon as Paul Regard had identified the sound.

"To whom are they talking?" Chan asked.

"There's no telling. I wish I knew. To a ship, perhaps; more likely to the shore." He hesitated. "Did you notice those two fellows in evening clothes who came down to the pier this morning in the auto?"

"Yes."

"They were after me."

"I'm glad they missed you."

"Ah, but have they? They must have got a tip that I was sailing on the Choctaw or they wouldn't have been there. I don't think they saw me, but, even so, the unspeakable Coupeau was ready to tell them all he knew. I kept out of sight, but I could see that.

"I wager that, right now, the captain's sending a message back to those two fellows and telling them that yes, he's got a mule-valet on board listed as Paul Regard and answering the description of the man they want."

"I can't believe that you ever committed a crime."

Knowlton made the declaration after a longish interval of silence that had begun to be embarrassing—for him at least.

"There are crimes and crimes," Regard answered, cryptically. "You must think that I'm a terrible person. You find me in a hay-shed being accused of theft by a thug. I'm on the point of being robbed myself when you jump in and save my life. You see me pursued by a couple of my country's secret police. I tell you myself that I'm returning to France at imminent risk of arrest. Yes, I suppose that I am a criminal. Only, my conscience is clear; and I do love France."

"Who was Coupeau?"

"A bad Frenchman. Personally I think that he is an escaped convict from the penal colony in Guiana. You heard him say it—that he saw me in Progreso; at least that he first saw there the star he was so anxious to see again.

"I remember. It was on a night that I was feeling sick, discouraged.

"To look at the star was as good as medicine. We are all fetish-worshipers. Last night, after we had shipped the mules, I stole a look at it again. This time it was an act of religion, so to speak. I was going back to France. I wanted to give my soul a bath."

"It is a fetish, then?"

"The star?"

"Yes."

"More than a fetish, my friend. What the Star-Spangled Banner is to you Americans so is this thing to me. It is more than a flag, for often a flag can be created or abolished by so simple a thing as a revolution. But not so with this star I carry. So you understand why I should have refused to show it to a villain like Coupeau, why I should have defended it with my life had you not so beautifully relieved me of the necessity for doing so."

"Why should you carry a thing of such value around with you?" Chan asked.

"There were various men scattered about the world to whom I wished to show it. One was shooting elephants in Siam. The other was living in the mountains of northern Chili. There was yet another who was tangled up in the bloody politics of Mexico. One, and he was among the first whom I saw, was living the life of a millionaire on Fifth Avenue in your city of New York.

"But most of them were in Europe—a score of them. I found them, one by one—in Madrid, in Rome, in London, in Petersburg. Some were poor. Some were rich. But, ah, *bon Dieu!*—they all were Frenchmen; and to all of them I showed the star."

Paul Regard paused. He looked about him into the shadows of the sunken deck.

"And then?" Knowlton asked.

"And then," Paul Regard continued, more softly, with an irrepressible thrill in his voice, "they all did obeisance to it, declared that they were ready to come back to France, risk all for the cause. And that is why, my friend, I carried the star with me on my journey around the world."

"But you travel so strangely for an ambassador!"

Paul Regard laughed, good naturedly. There for a moment Knowlton was fearful that he had given offense. When he compared his own simple past with the past of this youth at his side he felt a touch of humiliation.

Thus far his life had been circumscribed by the limits of the parish that had given him birth—his physical life had been thus circumscribed; his dreams had been free enough, and as far-reaching as any man's.

"You yourself have told me enough," said Paul Regard, "to assure me that you will understand. Are we not both chasers of dreams? And haven't we both preferred to go about our chase with the coin of daring?"

As the young Frenchman paused in his speech, both he and Knowlton became aware that some one had approached them unheard. They turned.

Standing just back of them was a bearded man whom Chan did not recognize, but whom Paul Regard greeted with a hasty salute.

"Are you Paul Regard?" the bearded one asked, as he looked from one to the other.

It was clear that he had been unable to distinguish them in the uncertain light, even if he had been acquainted with the name and face of the man he sought.

"Yes, sir," from Knowlton's friend.

"Follow me."

"May I ask, sir—"

"Follow me! I'm the captain of this ship. I'll see whether or not any cursed crooks can dupe me."

"Sir, if it was the wireless, I can explain."

As Paul Regard spoke, Chan saw that he was working at something about his neck. All that he had thus far heard about the star rushed in upon his mind. But the captain of the Choctaw had also seen the movement.

"No you don't," he rumbled, as he put out a heavy hand.

"Captain Cole," panted Paul Regard, softly, "don't you touch me. If you wanted to see me, you could have sent for me in the regular way. You can put me in the brig if you want to, and I'll stay there for the rest of the voyage; but, so surely as you lay hands on me, I'll make you regret it. I have the power."

The speech was so amazing, coming as it did from a mere mule-tender to the commander of a ship, that Captain Cole was as if stricken powerless. He stood there laboring to get control of his breath.

"If you don't go up to my cabin immediately"—he was speaking as if each word required a separate effort—"I'll shoot you with my own hand. And you," he snarled at Chan, "you get below, or I'll give you a dose of the same medicine."

While the captain spoke Chan himself seized the occasion to speak a sentence or two in French:

"I have a plan. Keep quiet."

He could see from the way Paul Regard turned his head slightly that he had heard. Then Chan stepped forward. He addressed the captain with a marked accent:

"My frien', M. Coupeau, he mistake," said Chan. His heart was in his throat, but it wasn't the first time in his life that he had acted on impulse. He had stepped forward, put out a placating hand. "It is I, M. Paul Regard!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE STAR OF ADVENTURE.

THE declaration must have caught both Captain Cole and the real Paul Regard by surprise. For that matter it had caught Chan by surprise himself.

The captain of the Choctaw let out a scarcely audible oath. He stood there for an interminable moment looking at Knowlton.

"If I weren't a God-fearing man," he said, "I'd maim you for life. Now, get a move on! Smart!"

Chan did not turn to look at his friend. He walked straight ahead.

Across the sunken deck there was a ladder mounting to the bridge. Back of the bridge stood the house where the officers had their quarters. So much had Knowlton gathered.

He climbed the ladder, heard the captain puffing behind him. One thing was certain, the real Paul Regard—or the man who called himself that—was going to have enough time to hide away that treasure of

his, that gemmed star of adventure that had led him thus far three-quarters of the way, and more, around the globe. There was some satisfaction in that.

"You can be thankful, all-fired thankful, that I'm not knocking you down, and putting you in irons, my lad," said Captain Cole, "instead of letting you come up here to explain."

He had shouldered his way to the front. He had opened an iron door. Then as if afraid to give his unwilling guest a chance to jump overboard he had shoved Chan into the room ahead of him.

It was a small room, not much more than ten feet square, and poorly ventilated. There was a double lamp in a bracket against the wall, but the light was poor.

Chan and the captain looked at each other. The captain was a rugged type, and small twinkling eyes that might have twinkled all the same for either rage or mirth. His face was very red, so much of it as was visible. His shoulders were round, but they had the lumpy aspect of heavy muscles, albeit a trifle stiff.

The mutual inspection lasted for half a dozen seconds.

"What have you got to say for yourself?" the captain asked then.

There was a subtle indication in his voice that he was willing for somewhat of a parley. Chan felt his own courage mounting with every breath he drew.

"First," he answered, "I should like to know with what I am charged."

"You're a smart one," was the retort to this, "but you've got a lot to learn. Sit down! No one ever said that Captain Cole wasn't as fair as any man. If you're a crook, it isn't for me to judge you. But, mark me! If you try any more of that back talk I'll put you overboard. Where are those diamonds?"

"I have no diamonds, sir."

"I am going to reason with you," went on the captain. "We're safe here—snug as a bug in a rug; no one to listen or to overhear. We weren't three hours outside the jetties before I began to hear tell of you. You're wanted, and you're wanted mighty bad. And I can tell you this, my hearty, that before we're fairly on our way we'll meet a dozen ships bound back to Orleans, any one of which would oblige me by returning you there."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, how about it?"

"I'm not afraid to go back to New Orleans."

The captain worked his jaws as if he were preparing a fresh morsel of eloquence.

"And I suppose that you are not afraid to have me speak a French warship, neither?"

"Then there is something in this talk?"

"What talk?"

"Of war."

"Who said anything about war?"

"Captain Cole, you are going to Santander with a cargo of mules. Are you aware that your cargo will be worth double its present price if war should be declared?"

It was a long shot on Chan's part. He had heard the stories told about the mule smugglers and speculators of the Civil War. He was making an effort to recall further anything that Paul Regard might have said.

"As for any diamonds," Chan went on, "I can assure you, sir, that I haven't a diamond in my possession. I shall even permit myself to be searched. I shall even be glad to go back to New Orleans and confront any one who may have accused me of theft. And I assure you that not a French warship, nor any other sort of a warship, will be anything but welcome to me."

The captain leaned forward. He fixed Knowlton's eyes with his own.

"Say," he said, "are you, or are you not, aiming to be king?"

The question was so surprising that Knowlton dropped back in his chair. The captain, pleased with the effect of what he had said, pawed into the breast-pocket of his coat with one of his heavy hands.

He brought out a sheet of yellow paper.

"And suppose, Mr. Paul Regard," he said, "you take a squint at that!"

Knowlton took the paper. There were various hieroglyphics at the top of the sheet, presumably indicating the source of the message, the time and the position of the ship when it had been received. Chan's eyes first glimpsed the two printed words, "Marconigram," "Choctaw," then he was reading the message:

> Paul Regard, 23, sailed morning as mule tender Choctaw wanted Orleans theft one large diamond star which now has with him five thousand dollars reward for star alone French Government gladly pay same amount his person for plotting revolution declare self king.
>
> DESCARTES, *Consulat Français.*

There were several things that were made clear by the message. One was that Paul

Regard, sure enough, was a fugitive from justice—or, at least, from injustice. Another was that those hints of his about the romantic mission that had taken him to various parts of the world were well-founded.

The French Government was offering a reward for his arrest. Plotting a revolution! To declare himself king! King of what? France had many scattered islands. Was it one of these?

While these questions were still bombarding his brain, while Captain Cole still sat there drilling him with his brilliant little eyes, the door opened without the formality of a knock and Paul Regard himself stepped in.

The captain started a roar, but the roar ended in a gurgling curse. Knowlton himself had let out an ejaculation. As for Paul Regard, he closed the door behind. Then he turned.

He was quick and lithe. There was no uncertainty in either his movements or his face.

"You needn't draw that gun, Captain Cole," he said.

"You infamous—"

"And you needn't curse me, either," said Paul Regard, his blue eyes dancing. "This friend of mine has given me all the time I needed. I tell you for your good, as well as for our own, that we have the upper hand."

"Get out of my cabin."

"Before or after I say what I have to say?"

A change had come over the young Frenchman. He looked as dangerous as a dynamo. He seemed to be no less surcharged with lightning.

Without waiting for the captain to answer him, he calmly picked up the wireless message lying on the table, read it through, then faced the captain again.

"I'll tell you this much, anyway. If anything happens either to me or this friend of mine, the Choctaw will never reach port."

## CHAPTER V.

### FATE HOLDS HER BREATH.

THE three of them, there in the captain's room aboard the Choctaw, made as strange a group as might have been found anywhere on the whole broad ocean.

Captain Cole went still and silent in the midst of his rage. His face was no less red. His little eyes were no less bright. But it was clear that his mind was grappling with a situation to which it was not equal.

"Men have been hanged for talk like that," he managed to say.

He might have added that a mule-ship with a lot of undisciplined men aboard is never a particularly safe place. Marine insurance is high for a vessel like that, at the best. Besides, his own conscience could not have been very clear.

"What do you mean by saying that the ship won't make port?" he asked.

"We're talking among ourselves," said Paul Regard, steadily. "A little while ago you sought me on deck. You thought I was a thief. You thought you could share in the loot."

"You lie!"

"Do you mean that?"

"Go on."

"I wasn't going to be brought up here and stripped. You talk about hanging. Bah! Do you think that puny threats of death carry any weight with a man whose cause is greater than life? Time was what I wanted. Time I've had.

"I went up to the wireless room. I've sent out a call. No one but my friends will understand it. But—I tell you this: from this time on the Choctaw is a marked ship. You'll be asked for an accounting."

Paul Regard had said this much with quiet intensity. Then Captain Cole broke in upon him. He had a thought that filled him with fierce joy.

"Oho!" he cried. "And you think that two can't play at that game! Trying to threaten me, are you?"

"Yes."

"And what's to prevent me from sending out a call of my own?"

"Your own interests. Do what I say, and you'll end this cruise richer than you ever hoped to be. Do the contrary, and you and your ship will go up in a puff of smoke."

"You're talking barratry!"

"Barratry, piracy, wholesale murder—whatever you will! These are mere words for the pangs of new birth. They are nothing when the life of a new nation, the new government of a nation, are at stake."

"Who are you to talk like this?"

"You'll know in good time."

"Then, what do you want?"

"My friend and I are aboard this ship as mule-tenders. You leave us in peace. That

is what we want. I tell you that there will be developments before you make port, and that these developments will mean wealth to you. Whether you share this wealth with your owners or not is none of my affair."

"And if there are no developments"—the captain's voice was like the exhaust of a broken steam engine; there was venom in his look—"we'll see."

"Thin ice," said Paul Regard, softly, "but I've been skating on it long, my dear Chan, and I'm still alive. Alive!"

Out of sheer exuberance, the young Frenchman threw an arm about Knowlton's shoulders. Chan had remained thoughtful, dazed. He cast a smiling glance at his friend, but his mind was troubled.

"You've got to tell me," he said.

They had come up into the bows of the ship. They stood there looking out into the darkness. It was a darkness that waxed and waned with the phosphorescence in the sea. To Knowlton—to Paul Regard, perhaps—the glimmer and gloom were as a symbol of life itself.

"That was great when you stepped forward and took my place a little while ago," the Frenchman said. "There for a minute or two the old man had me going. I was afraid that he and one of his mates, or two, would get me into the cabin, slug me, and take away the star. Twice you've saved me."

"I was merely bluffing," replied Knowlton. "But you—when I saw you come into the cabin up there, I could see that you were in deadly earnest. The captain saw it too."

"I was telling the truth. I did make the wireless man send out my message. There was nothing hard about that. He was a miserable little tike. And once that message had gone out I no longer feared anything in heaven or earth."

"What if the message doesn't reach your friends?"

"But it will."

"How do you know?"

"They are everywhere, even on the ocean. Some are in yachts. Some are in warships. Listen! I have come to believe that there are no accidents in the world. It wasn't an accident that caused our roads to cross—yours and mine. It will be no accident if I tell you what I have told no man not sworn to our cause."

The youth who had called himself Paul Regard paused for a moment. He raised his face to the breath of the ocean coming across the bows.

Then from the breast of his shirt he drew a leather case which was suspended about his neck by a leather thong. This time he did not even take the precaution of looking back of him. He was like one possessed.

"This thing," he said, "was carried by a race of kings—by Jean, surnamed the Good; by Charles, the Well-Beloved; by Louis, the Father of the People. It has descended to me. This being so, is there anything in heaven or earth that I should fear?"

It was a question addressed to the night. Knowlton heard in silence.

"It was given to me on my twenty-first birthday. It came to me like a consecration. I took it and started around the world. I am here. Who can tell where I shall be to-morrow?

"Old France had fallen on evil days. She had lost her spirit to the politicians. She had become the mother of scandals. I prayed to the soul of our holy St. Jeanne d'Arc. She answered me.

"There were others who had prayed to her. And when they saw the Star of the House of Valois, how they shook and wept, and swore that their lives were all too little a gift to render for the cause!

"I'll tell you what the cause is. It's the cause of French salvation. I've had my vision. That salvation is near.

"I knew it the moment that you and the captain left me alone back there—again saw my vision. My friend, I went into the wireless house, and at the sight of me the operator shrunk as if he had seen the Maid herself. He sent the call I gave him.

"You ask me how I know that it will reach my friends. I tell you that I do know. I walked into the cabin of the commander of this ship. It would have been the same had the ship been a Dreadnought. I was Jean, of the line of Valois.

"Do you want to know who I am? I'll tell you. I am the Duke of Angoulême. I am the heir to the throne of France."

There followed an interval of silence. The young Duke of Angoulême, as if he had shed the chrysalis of that lesser personality whom he himself had named Paul Regard, was in a state bordering on ecstasy.

His slender form was erect. His arms were crisped with nervous strength. He

was holding out the thing that the leather case contained as if it were a votive offering.

"Knowlton," he said, gently, with sudden relaxation, "you have heard me declare myself. The philosophers of the East say that every moment of life is a moment of choice. But, none the less, there are moments in the lives of all of us when we declare that choice so that both men and angels can hear. I have so declared myself this night.

"Sometimes it has been mere ambition that moved me most. At other times it was because of family pride. Often, often, I have been merely the heir of Valois. I tell you now, that I am nothing if not a son of France, and a brother to every man."

"I believe you," said Knowlton. "And will it be like that even should there be another revolution in France and you should come to the throne?"

"God is my witness!"

"Then we are brothers indeed!"

"You are Chan. I am Jean. Fate, I tell you, has thrown us together at the most critical moments of our lives. Shall we ever try to undo what she has done?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE STRANGE VESSEL.

AS the voyage lengthened and no answer came to the call that the Duke of Angoulême had sent out by the Choctaw's wireless, there spread a feeling of uneasiness and suspense aboard the mule ship that was as real as something visible and tangible.

Such feelings are apt to be contagious on shipboard. There probably wasn't a mule-tender or a sailor in the crew who didn't sense it. There were whispers of trouble between decks, in the forcastle—on the bridge itself, for aught any one knew.

Captain Cole was rarely visible. But several times both Chan and the Duke of Angoulême caught the captain's beady eyes fixed upon them.

They could easily imagine what was passing in his mind. It was a question as to whether or not he had been made a fool of. His looks boded no good.

"Should things have gone astray with that message of yours," said Chan, "we shall have to look to our skins before getting into port. I'm a good swimmer. Are you?"

"Yes, but we sha'n't have to swim," Jean answered.

It was always that way. He was like a man who has had a revelation, will never doubt again. All barriers had ceased to exist between them. For both of them the world had come to be a place of infinite possibilities. Of impossibilities there were none.

"What did you mean by saying that the Choctaw would never reach port?" Chan asked.

"Just that. We have facilities. France itself is split up, just now. There are regiments in the army, ships in the navy, which will not be at the call of the present government when the great moment comes, but at the call of France—the real France—the France of St. Jeanne d'Arc and the Lily Banner she carried in that other war of French salvation."

"Was it a war like that you meant?"

"A greater war, perhaps. We also have our channels of information. There isn't a capital in Europe where there are not many who are faithful to us.

"For a long time something has been preparing. As yet it is impossible to say just what. But this I know. These mules, my friend, are not destined for Spain — not eventually. Spain has all the mules she needs. The idea that France should be found weak—bled by her own children like a pelican—when the great hour strikes, that is one thing more than any other that moves us to act without more delay."

Day followed day, and still no news. The mule-tenders grumbled among themselves. One mule died, then another. Captain Cole appeared and disappeared, and each day found him more menacing.

Not another word, however, had he spoken to either Knowlton or the youth who still answered to the name of Paul Regard.

Then came the day when, far off to the east, there appeared the dim blue ridge of the Azores. The voyage was drawing to an end. For some time the Choctaw's wireless had been stuttering again.

The old ship was bucking her leisurely way through a sunlit sea as pleasant as a country meadow. All hands not busy were on deck. Spring was in the air even this far from land.

That brooding sense of uneasiness had subsided. The eternal grumbling had temporarily ceased. One of the mule-tenders was a darkey named Sambo Johnson—"of New York and Texas," so he said

—and he was being urged to do a song and dance.

Then there came a sudden breath of silence.

Looking down at the men on the deck from the bridge was Captain Cole, as dour as ever. Coming down the ladder from the bridge was a smooth-shaven viking, a Mr. Adamson, the mate.

Adamson carried a sheet of paper in his hand that even the most inexperienced in the group might have recognized as the copy of a message brought by wireless.

Just how easy it was for the police of any country to catch a fugitive at sea had often been a subject of discussion among the mule-tenders. There were those on board who regarded wireless as an unmitigated curse.

This may have explained at least a part of the silence.

Mr. Adamson had come to the center of the small square of sunken deck. No one else had budged. There was a slight smile on Mr. Adamson's face, but the captain—staring down from the bridge—was inscrutable.

Sambo Johnson, who, thirty seconds before, had been on the point of expressing himself in song and dance, had shrunk as much as possible, his face turning a trifle gray, his eyes rolling.

But the mate had let his eyes come to rest on the young Duke of Angoulême.

"Your name?"

"I answer to the name of Paul Regard, sir," was the answer, with cheerful respect.

Chan, whose breathing had stopped, dared look around. His friend gave him a smiling glance and was once more facing the officer.

"Report to Captain Cole," said the mate, and he turned on his heel.

"Everything regular, this time," breathed the Duke of Angoulême, in French, as he strode past Chan. "Cheer up. Keep your eye on the horizon, your heart above it."

"Remember the star," whispered Knowlton, in response.

Sambo Johnson, still gray, let out an involuntary guffaw of relief. He rolled his startled eyes. He spoke in explanation.

"Before I came on this cruise," he said, "I had an accident. I shed human blood."

Every one laughed, but Knowlton did not join them. He felt himself caught in the grip of a growing excitement.

Already, still very faint on the northern horizon, he had seen a rising stain of smoke. Captain Cole and the Duke of Angoulême had disappeared in the direction of the captain's cabin, but Mr. Adamson had taken his place on the bridge.

He also had seen the smoke to the north, was staring in the direction of it through his glass.

The old Choctaw changed her course, was bearing up to meet the stranger. The latter gradually revealed herself—a ship with the graceful lines and the white hull of a steam-yacht.

None of the odd incidents, nor the expectations, nor the hopes, that had crowded themselves into Knowlton's life since his departure from Bayou Lafarge stirred him more than he was stirred now by the spectacle of that yacht.

It wasn't merely because a craft like that came skimming up to keep her rendezvous with a mule-ship. It was because here was confirmation of all that the Duke of Angoulême had told him.

"Hey, you mule-skinners," came the familiar hail; "lay below, and stay there!"

It was no use to grumble. Anyway, Knowlton had a better plan. Between decks he made haste to a port-hole which had often served as a magic casement for him and the Duke of Angoulême during their hours of duty.

The Choctaw's engines were stopped. She swung around as if in response to Knowlton's unspoken prayer, and the port-hole was framing the yacht completely from the tips of her tapering masts down to the green boot-top which occasionally showed itself under her flowing water-line.

Chan had often enough seen beautiful craft on the Mississippi, but nothing like this. She was large. She was immaculate. He read her name—La Reine Blanche, the white queen.

She was a queen, all right. Chanler Knowlton hadn't quite realized it before—he was the friend of an heir to a throne!

The yacht dropped an accommodation-ladder down her side. A white boat, filled with smart sailors, was deftly lowered from her davits. And all the time the two vessels were slowly cradling closer, as is the way of ships when riding free.

Chan was watching with bated breath.

A girl and two men had left the yacht, had taken their places in the waiting boat. There was a flash of oars, and the boat came dancing toward the Choctaw.

"So long have I obeyed orders," said Chan to himself. "This time I disobey."

Keeping as much as possible out of sight, he went back on deck.

## CHAPTER VII.

### GRAY WRAITHS.

WHILE Knowlton was still below the yacht and the mule-ship had broken out their strings of signal-flags and were holding mute conversation. Mr. Adamson had swung a pilot-ladder over the side, stood at the head of it in a state of evident excitement. The boat from the yacht was drawing near.

Chan's attention focused on the girl. It was as if he had a premonition of the tremendous place she was destined to take in his life from this time on.

She sat in the stern-sheets of the boat, looking as graceful and trim as a seagull in the white yachting suit she wore. There was no doubting the fact that she was young and beautiful.

Knowlton's attention was fleetingly absorbed by the man at the girl's side. In his own way, he was no less striking—dignified, straight-backed, and yet with the snow-white beard of a patriarch.

It must have been an unusual occasion indeed that could have brought two such visitors as these on a visit to a mule-ship in mid-Atlantic.

Both the old gentleman and the girl dared the swaying dangers of the pilot-ladder. They came over the side accompanied by a young officer from the yacht. Knowlton would have given a hand, almost, to have been in that officer's place as he gallantly helped the girl.

She was as dark as the Duke of Angoulême was fair. There was another reason for not believing that she was his sister.

More than once, in their long watches together, Chan and the heir of Valois had talked about their respective families. More than once Chan had mentioned his sister, Rebecca.

Jean had expressed the thought that it must be a wonderful thing to possess a sister like that. It wasn't likely that he himself would have failed to mention such a sister had he had one.

The door of the captain's cabin had swung open to receive the visitors. It closed behind them.

Once more Knowlton was below making a pretense at work. It was the feeding hour, and the mules were restless. Their squeals and squirmings filled the twilight of the hold; and the hold itself was no darker, nor charged with greater confusion than was Knowlton's mind.

Who was the girl, if not Jean's sister? He was trying to shut her presence from his mind. Impossible. In his heart there was a dimly perceived ghost of jealousy, but he would not recognize it for what it was.

Another kind of wraith was to come into the lives of all of them before many more minutes elapsed.

Knowlton was just breaking open a bale of hay when he felt a touch on his arm. He turned to see Mr. Adamson standing there.

"Is your name Knowlton?" asked the mate softly.

"Yes, sir."

"Come with me."

Chan followed the mate to the deck. His heart was pounding. But, oddly enough, it was because he had suddenly become conscious of his appearance.

For almost ten days he had consorted with mules and mule-tenders, and he looked the part. Like this he would have to appear before that new, unnamed divinity of his. He knew it even before the mate told him so.

Mr. Adamson, without once looking back, had headed straight for the ladder leading to the bridge. A few seconds later the mate had knocked on the door of the captain's room, had thrown the door open in response to an order from within.

"Go in," he said.

Chan pulled off his felt hat. But he held his head high. He was conscious of the wave of heat that had taken possession of his face. For from the very first moment his startled eyes had found the girl he had been bereft of any power to seek further.

She certainly appeared more beautiful even than she had seemed a little while before—dark, slender, not very tall. She was about Rebecca's age, a scant twenty or so.

Her eyebrows were the finest Chan had ever seen on any girl—very long, rather straight, ending each in a tiny wing on the temple. Her eyes were equally remarkable, shadowy, modest, brave.

Her face was as fine and delicate as the face of a fairy, but, once he had looked at them, Chan could see only her eyes, for

they were reflecting, apparently, every process of the soul back of them.

Knowlton felt his face grow warmer still. He shifted his gaze. He had looked at her for only a second or two. And yet, if he never saw her again—so he was telling himself—he had a new stock of dream-stuff sufficient to last him a lifetime.

He saw the old gentleman of the white beard. He saw some one whom he vaguely put down as the officer from the yacht. Then he was hailed by a familiar voice:

"Chan! Don't you know me?"

The supposed officer had stepped forward. It was Jean, the Duke of Angoulême.

"They're taking me away," he said, with both hands out. "Will you come with me? It is a moment of choice. You don't have to decide now unless you want to. We don't know what lies ahead—except peril, plenty of that!"

Before Chan could answer, before he had fully recovered from his surprise, there came a rough scrambling of footsteps from the cabin adjoining the captain's room where this brief interchange had taken place.

There was only a pretense at a knock before the door was thrust open. It was the young officer from the yacht himself who appeared. Just back of him was Captain Cole, his usually inexpressive face fairly aflame now with consternation.

"Sire," the young officer cried rapidly in French, "a squadron of warships is coming up from the southwest. They're still too far off to be recognized, but whoever they are we are in danger of being surprised. They have sighted us. They've changed their course. They are coming toward us at full speed."

It was the Duke of Angoulême whom he had addressed as "Sire." Jean had heard the announcement with a swift concentration of interest, but no other semblance of excitement.

"There isn't a moment to lose, in very truth," he exclaimed. "They have undoubtedly heard interesting things about the Choctaw by this time. They'll look over the crew. It'll be surprising if they don't pay equal attention to the Reine Blanche."

"It is your safety, Sire, that is of most consequence," said the old gentleman of the white beard.

He had risen to his feet. He was so tall that he had to bow his head to keep it from hitting against the ceiling. Neither had he shown any great excitement, but it was clear that he also considered the situation as grave.

"French ships!" exclaimed Mr. Adamson, putting his head in at the door.

Chan's eyes, in spite of himself, sought those of the girl. He had felt her gaze upon him. It was as unmistakable as the touch of a hand.

For the fraction of a second the world had dissolved away. Only he and she remained in the universe.

The Duke of Angoulême was taking charge of the situation. Whether or not he would ever be the king of France he was showing himself the leader now.

"That settles it," he said, with reference to the report Mr. Adamson had just made. "French ships! They're on our trail. Warren," he addressed the young officer from the yacht, "I hate to ask you to do it, but you'll don those rags I've just taken off. You'll stick to the mule-ship."

"With pleasure, Sire!"

"And if any questions are asked, you are the Paul Regard who came aboard at New Orleans." The duke cast a swift glance at Captain Cole. "Do you understand, sir?"

"Aye, aye! That I do," said Captain Cole, readily enough.

"And you, my dear Chan," went on the duke, "are you ready to accept a great trust on behalf of one who loves you?"

"I'd give my life for you," said Chan, with the eyes of the girl upon him, filling his very heart with tepid heat.

"I knew that you would," said the duke with feeling.

He was taking the thong from about his neck even as he spoke. The leather case followed it.

"I'm going to the yacht. Very likely we shall be chased and overtaken. I shall be searched. Every one on board the boat may be searched. The star is known. What a piece of the true cross is to the devout so this is to the cause.

"I know you, Chan. You will wear it. You will bring it in safety—if God spares your life—to the Château Lenoir, near Nantes, on the River Loire, there return it to me—or to my heirs."

He had slipped the leather thong over Chan's head. The American felt the weight of the relic against his breast. There was the briefest interval then.

"I'll do it," he said, when he was able to speak.

"If you live, dear Chan."

"I shall live. My life has just begun."

There was no time for introductions. Chan found himself gripping the hands of the old gentleman with the white beard.

Whatever the old gentleman may have thought about the action of the Duke of Agoulême in thus turning over the Star of Valois to a stranger he was of the breed reared to the credo: "The king can do no wrong."

He may have been a good four inches taller than the American. He looked down into Knowlton's large brown eyes with his own shrewd but kindly gray ones—eyes that reminded Knowlton of the Duke of Angoulême's.

"God protect you, my boy," the old man said.

"I thank you," said Chan, with sincerity.

Then that thing happened that had been slumbering in his consciousness—for centuries, it seemed; for only a few seconds, as men measure time.

Knowlton and the girl were close together, face to face. He felt her soft, smooth fingers against his own. His eyes filmed. So did hers, perhaps.

He bowed his head. He pressed her fingers to his lips. He heard her murmured "Adieu!"

They were all on deck. The sun was slanting low. There to the southwest, like a flotilla of gray wraiths, harbingers of disaster to individual hopes and aims, however high and fine those hopes and aims might be, they saw the speeding warships.

There were half a dozen of them. There was a suggestion of swift intensity in the trail of smoke they had already unreeled behind them as far as the eye could see. There was a suggestion of self-contained wrath in their very silence.

## CHAPER VIII.

### DARK WATERS.

IT was through a ruddy haze that the Reine Blanche began to slip away. Almost immediately after the return of the boat that had brought the visitors to the Choctaw the funnels of the yacht started to volcano smoke. It was evident that she intended to make a run for it.

The chances were in her favor. In two hours, at the most, it would be night, and she had a big start. She looked as if she were built for speed.

Knowlton, standing at the rail of the Choctaw, watched the yacht. The girl was on it. So was that fine old gentleman with the white beard who had called him his "child." So was Jean, Duke of Angoulême, he who might one day be King of France—"a son of France, a brother to every man."

But it was of the girl Chan thought. Who was she? Were they to meet again? Or had she come into his life merely to disappear again forever?

He saw a white figure appear on the yacht's after deck. The yacht was a half-mile, perhaps farther, away and moving rapidly. But he recognized her. She couldn't have seen him, there where he stood on the sunken deck of the mule-ship, for only his head and shoulders were visible.

But he saw her wave the tiny white pennant of a handkerchief. He felt a wave of joy. His heart sang that the signal had been for him. Just in the hope that she might see, he waved his hat.

The Choctaw herself had started to move, but she wasn't to go far—not just then.

Before her battered single screw could have made more than twoscore revolutions there came a puff of smoke from the leading battleship of the approaching squadron, the throbbing report of a blank shot. It is possible that the shot had been intended as a signal to the yacht as well as to the mule-ship, but only the Choctaw seemed to have heard it.

Once more the Choctaw's engines paused. But the Reine Blanche was picking up speed like a torpedo boat. Out of her funnels the heavy smoke uncurled as heavy as a flow of lava.

Chan could have cheered.

Again there came a reverberating bark from the oncoming squadron. Chan, with a glance in that direction, saw that there had come a break in the squadron's formation. It was plain that a chase was on.

There was brief enough time for observation, not enough to tell whether the yacht would prove fast enough to keep her distance until the sheltering night came down.

And there was this in her favor, as well. It wasn't likely that the officer of a warship, in these piping times of peace, would risk a shot at a civilian craft however much he might be tempted to do so.

Out of the red mist had come one of the

gray wraiths of a little while ago—as gray as ever, just as mysterious, the specter of a sea-policeman to scare any man unless his conscience was clear. What became of the other ships of the squadron Chan was never to know.

As the battleship came up he put his hand into his shirt. He touched the relic that lay there against his breast—a heritage of kings. He had given his word to protect it.

Suddenly he was aware of all that this might mean. What chance would one man have against leviathan over yonder?

It wasn't that his confidence in himself was failing. But, by accident, or by the design of Providence, he had thrown a glance in the direction of the bridge, and he had seen Captain Cole up there.

That was where the danger lay. He remembered now. Captain Cole had been looking into the cabin when the star changed hands.

Now, the captain wasn't one to lie cheerfully for one against whom he most certainly harbored a grudge. He had received, most likely, all the money that he hoped to receive.

Chan remembered the officer, Warren, who was to impersonate Paul Regard, should the occasion arise. He went to look for him. He found him in the hold among the mules.

Already he had shifted from his natty uniform into the discarded clothing of the Duke of Angoulême. In broken English he was trying to explain to the mule-boss how it happened that he had taken the place of the man who had disappeared.

"Boss," said Chan, "would my pay for the trip be any object in helping you to recognize this friend of mine as Paul Regard?"

Said the mule-boss: "Bo, for two bucks I'd swear he was William Jennings Bryan."

"You're on," said Chan.

"I speak English," said the young Frenchman, "but I do not follow you."

"You're safe, so far as he is concerned," Chan explained in French. "What bothers me is that neither of us can have confidence in the captain of the ship."

"I'm of your opinion," rejoined the young officer. He smiled. "Permit me. I am the Marquis de Warren, alias Paul Regard."

Chan introduced himself, and they shook hands.

"They spoke highly of you," said M. de Warren.

"They!"

The marquis had seen the party from the yacht after Chan had made his adieux. Chan wondered if the "they" could have included the unforgettable girl. He was burning to ask who she was. He decided, however, that it would be indelicate.

The battleship was also sending a boat to the mule-ship. It looked as if every member of the Choctaw's crew were on hand to watch, from the men on the bridge down to the last stoker.

"The Fontenelle!" whispered the Marquis de Warren, recognizing the battleship before he had had a chance to see her name. "The Fontenelle, and she is commanded by a republican of the republicans, Captain Gaspard. He'll probably give orders that every man on board be examined."

"But this is an American ship," said Chan.

"He's apt to do what he considers necessary—act first, apologize later."

"What do you propose?"

"To face the music, hope for the best. If they go back to the Fontenelle and report that Paul Regard is on the Choctaw and that he is not the man they want, there will always be the chance that they will call off the pursuit of the Reine Blanche. If they do that, his majesty will be safe."

It was the first time that Knowlton had ever heard the expression "his majesty" used in familiar speech of a living person. It somehow reminded him that this was history in the making.

As for the title itself, he had no particular aversion for it. The inhabitants of Bayou Lafarge were good Americans, but there had come down to them family and colonial traditions that were as aristocratic, royalist even, as those of the Marquis de Warren himself.

But it was of that badge of danger he wore against his breast that Chan was thinking. He saw now that neither his own nationality nor that of the ship was likely to save him should Captain Gaspard of the Fontenelle decide on extreme measures.

This was the open sea, but, as easily as not, he could order the Choctaw to accompany him into the nearest French port.

The boat from the Fontenelle was in charge of a lieutenant. He had a short beard, and his cap looked a little too large for him. It was pulled down to his ears,

and was held there by a chin-strap. But he moved with the authority of the gray battleship. There was no mistake about that.

He was smiling and polite. His eyes, though, had the direct and businesslike gaze of two thirteen-inch guns. He had been met at the ladder by Mr. Adamson. Then the two of them proceeded immediately to the captain's room. At the head of the ladder remained a couple of marines.

"The captain will tell him everything," said Chan.

"Listen!" rejoined the marquis.

From the north there came the unmistakable report of a cannon—blank shot or solid, there was no telling. Nor was there any telling how the chase of the Reine Blanche was turning out, nor to what lengths the pursuers would go.

"His majesty was right in not taking the star with him," the Marquis de Warren whispered. "Have you thought of a hiding place in case of necessity?"

"Yes."

"Hey, you mule-skinners," came the voice of the mule-boss. "Lively, now! Line up! The captain desires to look you over—up there in his cabin."

"That means," said Knowlton, "that they'll search me—if I go. But, listen, my friend. I mustn't go. Nor can I hide the star on the ship. It might be found by some one during my absence. I've got to keep it on me, like life itself."

"We could put up a fight," suggested the marquis, his eyes flashing.

"There are too many of them," said Knowlton, with a smile. "I've thought of a better plan. I'm going to drop into the sea. It's getting dark. I'll simply be missing. When you can, get a rope over the starboard side. In the meantime, I'll have a life preserver. You'll say that I was blue—talking of suicide."

"Hey there, you two frog-eaters," came the voice of the mule-boss, "get into line or I'll cripple the both of you."

"Yes, sir," cried Knowlton.

He and the marquis exchanged a hasty handclasp. Then, as the marquis started forward, Chan, watching his chance, slipped across the deck and entered the hold.

He was in a desperate hurry. He found a stack of life-belts, put on one of them, carried two others in his hand. Then he took a long drink from a water-tap.

There was an iron port, which was always left open in fine weather for purposes of ventilation. There he paused. What if the marquis should be unable to get a rope over the side?

Knowlton found a rope-end that would have served his purpose; but, before he could make use of it he heard some one approaching.

There wasn't a moment to lose. If he were discovered now, he would indeed be in for an explanation. Picking up his spare life-belts, he ran once more to the open port. He peered through it. The water looked good to him, not very far down, shadowy, almost dark, an ideal hiding place.

How many secrets were not already hidden there?

He straddled the port. Then he dropped.

## CHAPTER IX.

### WHISPERING WITCHES.

AT first, Knowlton felt perfectly at home in the water. It was much warmer than he had expected to find it. He reflected on this, as he reflected on many things.

His mind went back to the Mississippi and the Gulf. Then he knew. This was a branch of the Gulf Stream in which he found himself—that branch of it that turns southward as the mother current approaches Europe.

The knowledge consoled him. It was as if once more he had returned to the bosom of the old Mississippi, which hitherto had always been good to him, which would not be otherwise now.

He took his time about arranging his life-belts, making himself comfortable.

But an hour slipped by. He knew it by the bells on the ships. He could hear not only the Choctaw's bell, but that of the warship as well. The sound came to him as melancholy as the tolling of a church-bell for a funeral.

It was evident that something more than a mere cursory examination was under way. The lieutenant from the Fontenelle was certainly taking his time.

He was close up against the solid wall of the Choctaw's side when a little gust of speech reached him from the deck just above. It was the lieutenant talking to the Choctaw's captain.

"It is very strange that he should commit suicide so soon, just when we want him."

"He got scared, sir; and that's my opinion." That was Captain Cole speaking. "If he's buried himself in the hay, though, I shall have him out, sir, and in the brig. There won't be any trouble about collecting the reward for that star—"

Chan couldn't hear the rest of it. Propelling himself with his legs, he kicked his way out from the Choctaw. There was imminent risk that some one might look overboard and discover him.

But darkness was coming on apace. From a distance he conned the warship. He was careful, though, to keep well down. There were always sharp eyes aboard a ship like that, alert for the discovery of interesting things on the surface of the waves.

Nor would it be safe for him to swim too far away from the Choctaw, either. At any moment the visit from the warship might come to an end, the mule-ship get under way again.

As yet there had been no sign of de Warren nor of the rope that he had planned to let over the side. Not that Knowlton was worrying. He had perfect confidence that the adventure was going to end all right. It was as if that weight against his breast were a nucleus of confidence.

He had often been in the water for hours at a time. All the boys of Bayou Lafarge were as nearly amphibious as it is possible for human creatures to be.

The night deepened. Presently the lights were gleaming from the Choctaw.

Knowlton now felt safe in pushing himself through the water until he was once more against the Choctaw's rough plates. He studied the port through which he had come. It was still open. Had there been something to stand on he could have reached it.

Several times he was tempted to hail, but he decided that, so long as the lieutenant from the warship was aboard, this would be too risky.

He was lying there in the water almost as comfortably as if he had been in his own bed back there in his grandmother's house in Bayou Lafarge when it suddenly seemed to him that some strange force was propelling him through the sea. It was impossible that an ocean current should start up like that, and yet there he was sliding past the Choctaw's scaly plates.

The sensation could have lasted only for a second or two before full realization came upon him. It came with a sound of churned waters.

It wasn't he who moved. It was the Choctaw's self, and that was the beat of her screw.

Lieutenant Buisson, just back from his visit to the American ship Choctaw, stood in the presence of Captain Gaspard, commanding the French battleship Fontenelle.

The captain was a man of forty-five or so, with a pleasant face which, however, became easily grim. His face went grim now, as he listened to the report of Lieutenant Buisson.

"Paris is right," he said. "Our friends the Royalists are at it again, as active as flies around a pot of honey. Are you sure that this missing man is not M. d'Angoulême himself?"

"I have the captain's word for it, not that I trust him very much. He says that the missing man is an American—one of those French-speaking Creoles from Louisiana. Of course he may still be on the ship. We made as thorough a search as possible. If he is on board he won't be able to remain hidden very long. We'll get him as soon as the ship goes into Santander."

"And how about Paul Regard?"

"I recommend that he be arrested for theft on his arrival in Spain. That will be enough to insure his extradition. Once we get him on French soil, we shall be able to find out who he is and what his connections are."

"And there was no trace of the star?"

"Only what the captain said, that it was turned over to the missing American by the fellow who got away on the Reine Blanche."

*"Crè nom de Dieu!"* Captain Gaspard exploded, softly. "I wanted to get my hands on that star almost as much as I wanted to grab this Sieur d'Angoulême himself. It ought to be in the Louvre with the other crown-jewels. It's caused the republic more trouble already than the Teeth of the Prophet. And as between Royalists and Moslems, give me the Moslems every time.

"Get word over to the consul at Santander to get the American, if he be on board, and, if he is not, to go through the whole ship with a fine-tooth comb. If he really has committed suicide, as it now appears, it isn't likely that he took a thing like this along with him. And of course

every man on the ship, from the captain down, will be up for fresh examination."

"How about the Reine Blanche, my captain?"

"At last reports the Lafayette and the Hugo were drawing up on her, but darkness was giving her a chance to slip away still. She'll be seized on some charge or other as soon as she makes port. There is some satisfaction in that. She belongs to the Sieur du Barry, Angoulême's grandfather, an old Royalist himself who ought to be in prison."

Lieutenant Buisson, after a few amenities, saluted and withdrew. He shaped a leisurely course toward the Fontenelle's wireless room.

Before he reached it his quick ears had caught a succession of giant dots and dashes that interested him even more than this search for Royalists had done. He paused a moment. With a quickened step and a faster pulse he covered the remaining distance to the wireless room, opened the door and entered.

It was a night never to be forgotten in the annals of the world—big with possibilities even then, when only a fraction of its significance stood revealed.

But Lieutenant Buisson was a student of international politics, a man of fine intuitions.

Out of the darkness there had come one of the invisible messages that hold the world in their net, particularly at night when conditions for sending wireless messages are always better than they are in the daytime. This particular message had been heralded by certain code letters in use at the great French station of the Eiffel Tower.

While certain elements of the French government had been seeking the heir to one throne—the ghost of a throne—the heir to another throne had been assassinated. Over in the stormy Balkans the thing had come to pass. All the chancelleries of Europe had been roused from their somnolence.

A little quiver of uncertainty was already recording itself in the nerves called telegraph wires. In the upper reaches of the atmosphere from aerial to aerial the quiver was becoming a shake.

"War! I hardly think so," said Lieutenant Buisson. "Not for France, at any rate."

The battleship Fontenelle, which had been going north, put about and shaped her course for Gibraltar. All through the night her sensitive wireless apparatus kept picking up strange and familiar messages alike. They came to her out of the blackness. They were like faint little shivers running over the skin of the globe.

There were messages of births and deaths; of minor and major operations on the stock exchanges; explanations why John Smith would remain in Paris for a couple of weeks longer or Peter Jones was unable to leave London. It was as if the air was filled with a bevy of old witches, up there, riding the night on their broomsticks. And they were witches who spoke all the languages of the world, who knew everything that was going on.

But throughout their often meaningless chatter there sounded again and again words and phrases concerning that greater theme: War!

When Knowlton discovered that the Choctaw was in motion, was steaming away without him, he had let out a hail, then another one. His voice was submerged in the roar of tormented waters.

He recognized this new peril when it was almost too late—when the threshing screw of the mule-ship was almost on him. He discarded the two extra life-preservers he had been nursing. He battled against the increasing suction.

It was as if he had climbed a hill of liquid glass, had tumbled down the outer slope of it in a neck-breaking descent. When he recovered himself, both the Choctaw and the Fontenelle were far away.

Once more he hailed, at the top of his lungs, frantically. But it was the very note of panic in his voice that sobered him, made him realize that now, as never before in his life, he had need of every resource of calm and courage, of heart and brain.

The waters heaved. They lifted him up and let him down again, and each time that they lifted him the warship and the freighter had been shifted. Then it was as if they were standing still and it was he himself who was again being rushed through space.

At last, when he rose on the crest of another swell, the lights of both of them had disappeared.

He was alone.

*(To Be Continued.)*

# The Wind from the West

by Robert S. Lemmon

I.

"YOU'LL sell out now *at my price* or I'll put your measly little company on the rocks in a month!"

President Connell of the Amalgamated Pumps Corporation, having delivered this dictum, rolled his cigar expertly to the extreme left corner of his cavernous mouth, where it tilted at an aggressive and uncompromising angle. His fishy, pale gray eyes gazed coldly at the younger man across the flat topped desk.

Carter Chapman stared back, his head slightly to one side, his right hand resting on the desk, thumb and forefinger slowly turning his pencil end over end, end over end, on the polished mahogany.

He was young, discouragingly young compared to the grizzled magnate, but he was not unused to men. In contests of business brain he was old beyond his thirty years, and he possessed a fighting jaw.

As he studied Connell's face Chapman was thinking as he had never thought before. Could it be that this was to be the end, that he must presently sacrifice his thriving business, the fruit of years of ceaseless, wearing toil, on the altar of trust greed?

With the realization of a perfect success almost within his grasp, would he have to relinquish it all at the word of this unscrupulous hulk in the leather swivel chair? Who were Connell and the Amalgamated Pumps Corporation, that they should have the power to force such ruinous terms as had just been proposed to him?

On the other hand, what chance would he, with his comparatively small organization and resources, have against them if it came to a fight to the finish? The practically universal tyranny which the Amalgamated people exercised over all branches of the pump trade were common knowledge.

Others had opposed them and been ground to bits. Should he—?

Slowly Chapman's pencil ceased its methodical turning. His fingers tightened over it, showing white under the pressure, and as he rose decisively his eyes never wavered from the grim face opposite.

When he spoke his voice was hard and cold.

"Mr. Connell, the price you have offered for the business of Chapman & Co. is preposterous. I will not consider it for a moment. As to the alternative, it is only what can be expected from an organization as notoriously unprincipled and corrupt as the Amalgamated Pumps Corporation. My answer is that Chapman & Co. will continue in business under its own name and in its own way. Good-day."

He turned and walked to the door. As he stepped out and closed it behind him he heard an expressionless grunt from Connell. It was not an encouraging sound.

Chapman walked swiftly from the Amalgamated Building to his own offices, a matter of half a dozen blocks, and went straight toward his private sanctum. On the way up the corridor he paused at his partner's door and looked in.

"Can you come to my office for a few minutes, right away?"

"I've just seen Connell," he went on, when they were alone. "He offered fifty thousand for the plant, business and everything. I refused, and he swore he'd bust us. I told him to go to the devil on both counts. Was I right?"

"Right," echoed the other, nodding gravely. "We'll fight him."

"We'll have to," answered Chapman. "The question is, how long can we hold out? You've got the running details of the business better in mind than I have; how long do you think we can stand it? You know how they'll go about their dirty work—boycott, bribery inside and out, and all that!"

For answer his partner reached for a pad and figured busily. In five minutes he looked up.

"About a year, unless they're sharper than I think. This is August; our resources ought to carry us to the first of next July."

"And then?" asked Chapman.

The other's eyes wandered to the window and stared with a peculiarly intent expression at a blank wall across the street. For a full minute he was silent. Then,

"A lot of things can happen in eleven months," he said thoughtfully. "A whole lot of things—on—*both*—sides!"

When Carter Chapman had closed the door of President Connell's office behind him, that master of consolidated business wasted no time in reflection. Reaching to the corner of his desk he pressed one of a series of electric buttons.

Instantly his secretary popped into the room. Connell did not even look up.

"Tell Rogers, Cunningham, Williams, Aspinwall and Convers I want to see 'em at once," he snapped.

The secretary vanished silently.

The five lieutenants entered a minute later. Not one of them would have merited a second glance from Diogenes had that legendary gentleman been favored with intuition and anything better than pale lantern light in which to exercise it. Connell glanced at them briefly as they ranged themselves before his desk. To a man they were alert and attentive.

"Young Chapman, of Chapman & Co., was just here," growled the great man. "I offered him a price for his business. He refused it. *Put him on the rocks*—you know the game. Don't bother me with details, they're up to you. That's all."

The five filed out. It was a familiar task the boss had set them, and within an hour the wheels which were eventually to steer the little Chapman ship upon the bankruptcy shoals were whirring busily.

Telegrams clicked off to supply houses three thousand miles away; jobbers far and near received their instructions; code messages went to many supposedly reputable business offices in many diverse lines. And to one and all of them the burden of the song was this:

"Put Chapman & Co. on the rocks!"

## II.

Two weeks had passed when one day an immaculate, dreamy-eyed young man entered the Amalgamated Pumps Building and presented his personal card in the outer office.

"I should like to see President Connell about an important matter," he said to the youth who took the engraved pasteboard and regarded it somewhat suspiciously.

"He's at a conference," replied the boy after a moment.

"How long will it last?"

"Don't know," was the surly answer.

"I'll wait, then," and the young man took a chair which commanded a door on whose glass were the gilt words "Executive Offices." Presently he drew a sheaf of official-looking papers from an inner pocket and began marking them here and there with cryptic marginal notes.

The boy watched him furtively, making swift estimate of his easy manner, his handsome diamond stick-pin, his evident air of belonging to the wealthy class.

Perhaps, after all, the boss might want to see this millionaire-appearing stranger. Suckers with money were the boss's pet prey. He looked at the card again, then advanced to where the young man sat.

"What'll I tell Mr. Connell you'd like to see him about, Mr. Ellison?" he asked courteously.

"Personal business," responded the other, busily figuring on his papers. "Purely personal," he added as an afterthought.

"Can't tell any one else. Is the conference over?"

"I'll see, sir. Just a minute, please," and the boy vanished through an inner door. In a moment he returned.

"All right, Mr. Ellison. This way, sir."

Young Ellison rose, slipped the papers into his pocket, and followed his guide.

They passed down a long corridor, richly carpeted, lined with many framed blueprints, and intensely quiet, and at its end came to the president's door. This the boy opened while he stood aside deferentially for Ellison to enter.

President Connell sat alone, studying the pages of a report spread out on his desk. As the door opened he glanced at Ellison's card where it lay in a tiny tray, then stared appraisingly at his visitor.

What he saw evidently satisfied him, for he waved his hand toward a luxurious armchair strategically placed for callers.

"You never heard of me, Mr. Connell," began Ellison, taking the proffered seat, "but I have a proposition which may interest you. It's not insurance, nor pumps, nor wildcat stocks. It's perfectly solid *terra firma*. Shall I continue?"

Now if there was one thing for which the president cherished an inordinate mania, even to the exclusion of his usual far-sighted business judgment, that thing was land speculation. Real estate had given him his first start in life, and he had dealt in it more or less extensively ever since.

That many of his development ventures had failed because of a peculiar twist in his mental make-up which caused him to overlook some perfectly obvious and fatal feature discouraged him not a particle. Land was his hobby, and he rode it with a pig-headed obstinacy and unskill that never hearkened to advice or caution.

He nodded for Ellison to proceed.

"It's seashore property, sir, twelve miles of it on a perfect ocean beach, and a mile inland. It's not far from Atlantic City, and I have an absolutely clear title to it—an inheritance from my father. The papers are here in my pocket."

"Why do you want to sell?" Connell spoke for the first time. His voice was heavy and betrayed neither interest nor indifference.

Ellison flushed a little. "Well, you see—the truth is, I'm in rather bad. Must raise some money, you know—it doesn't amount to much, but I need it in a business way, and I—well—"

"What's your price for the land?"

"Why, if I can dispose of it before the end of the month I'll let it go for ten dollars an acre. Atlantic City is only a few miles from it."

"Let me see the papers," said Connell, leaning forward.

When Ellison reached the street an hour later his face was quietly triumphant. The interview had been easier than he had dared hope. In a few days it would be definitely settled, he told himself, for Connell had accepted his invitation to motor down the coast the next week-end and look the property over.

"If we only have the right weather it'll go," he muttered on his way up-town. "As long as the wind is off the ocean I'm not worrying much. If it blows from the west—well, let's hope it won't!"

President Connell was ready and waiting when Ellison, in a luxuriously appointed scarlet roadster that was the last word in motor construction, called for him at ten o'clock on the following Saturday morning. In half an hour they were clear of the city and bowling southward through the open country.

The trip down, that glorious summer day, was all that heart of man could desire. For all his crabbed greed old Connell was sneakingly fond of the out-of-doors, and by the time an excellent luncheon had been disposed of at a roadside inn, done in old English oak and liveried waiters, his customary uncommunicative mood had largely altered.

He told a pet story, at which his companion laughed uproariously, and when they rolled into Atlantic City at dusk and pulled up before a giant hotel, they were chatting together like old friends.

Connell had never been in the pleasure metropolis before, he admitted. He knew nothing about the seashore anyway, except by hearsay. To young Ellison, however, it seemed to be an old stamping ground, and he nodded this way and that to acquaintances who greeted him smilingly.

They dined in a huge hall where were hundreds of the country's moneyed class, and later strolled over to the famous boardwalk. Here, in the blaze of a myriad lights, there gradually came over the magnate a full realization of what it all stood for.

He studied the care-free crowds, the

fashionably dressed men and women in the rolling chairs, the long pleasure piers stretching seaward, the palatial hotels, the pervading air of spendthrift jollity.

"Gad!" he ejaculated under his breath. "The man who started all this must be coining money!"

And late that night Ellison snapped off the electric lights in his own room and walked to the window with an elated:

"The old boy's keen for it, all right—good thing he's pig-headed and ignorant of this Jersey coast! If only this sea-breeze holds through to-morrow!"

He raised the sash and looked out. The night was luminously clear. Eastward, from the ocean, swept a cool, steady wind. Intermittently the air trembled with the roar of a mighty surf pounding on the beach. Ellison laughed softly.

"I guess I'll make it," he whispered.

At breakfast next morning President Connell was in as jovial spirits as his warped nature would permit. He joked and laughed and grunted "Great!" when Ellison told him he had arranged for a fast power cruiser to take them up the coast to his property. By ten o'clock they were under way.

A mummy would have rejoiced in that Sunday morning sail. The wind, streaming in from the open Atlantic, pleasantly tempered the warmth of a brilliant sun. White clouds and blue water gleamed and sparkled and flashed.

Under an awning on the forward deck of the speedy cruiser the chief executive of the Amalgamated Pumps Corporation lounged at ease, smoking huge gold-wrapped cigars and enjoying himself immensely.

Ellison sat beside him, a pair of binoculars in his hand. After a time he handed them to Connell and pointed ahead.

"See that lighthouse yonder, Mr. Connell? That marks one end of my strip. She runs north from there twelve miles. Half an hour more will put us at the landing—just a little wharf, you know, where the fishing boats tie up."

The president was silent when, a little later, the cruiser glided through a winding inlet and slowed up at the weather-worn dock. His business manner had come upon him again ere they landed. His eyes held the intent, introspective expression of deep thought.

For all its deserted appearance, Ellison's bit of coast-line was pleasant to look upon in the glittering August sunshine. From the top of the lighthouse whither the young man, long familiar with its keeper, took his prospective buyer, the land spread far.

Ellison pointed out the limits of his holdings.

"There she is," he announced.

Directly below them, and stretching north as far as they could see, lay a magnificent, gently shelving beach, white edged where the surf broke. Sloping up from it, endless sand dunes, scrub covered and utterly deserted. Back of them, again, higher, more level ground sweeping a full mile to Ellison's western boundary.

And between that and the distant mainland, a flat expanse of tidal meadows, thousands upon thousands, of useless government land, cut by innumerable channels, creeks and landlocked, brackish ponds.

For minutes, as he studied this view, Connell was silent. Unconsciously his sallow, knotty hands rubbed softly together. When at last he spoke it was to himself, and in a barely audible whisper:

"Atlantic City was built out of nothing but brains, capital and a God-forgotten place like this. Brains, capital and a good beach—and look what it is now!" Then turning to Ellison he said:

"I'll take it. Ten dollars an acre for the whole thing, spot cash. Bring the papers to my office Tuesday morning and I'll give you a check for the amount. Come on, now, let's go back—I want to get some more details about Atlantic City values!"

## III.

It was characteristic of President Connell that he never did any job himself which he could hire some one else to do as well. Not that he was averse to hard work and plenty of it—quite to the contrary. But he had not come to his present commanding position in the business world without realizing to the full the value of clever employees.

He himself was skilled in pumps and finance, and, he stubbornly believed, in real estate selection. For his other manifold business interests his invariable practise was to supply the capital, employ experts to manage it, and reap the golden harvest into his own barns.

It was quite natural therefore, when the passing of his eight-thousand-dollar check to George Ellison, of Valley Road, Montville, had made him the sole owner of that

young man's twelve miles of unimproved ocean front, that the trust head should summon to his private office in the Amalgamated Building various prominent specialists whom he knew to be the best men for carrying out the plan he had in mind. From diverse directions they came, their ways converging before the great man's desk promptly at the appointed hour of three.

They were a distinguished gathering. There were Phillips, of Phillips & Untermeyer, surveyors; Vice-President Jacques, of the A. & J. C. Railroad; old man Thomas, head of the foremost building construction firm in the country; Wilson, of the United Light and Power; Harmon, whose work as a sanitary engineer had sent his name the world over; and Hempstead, the man to whom the All Steel Steamboat Line owed its life, liberty and pursuit of monopoly.

Precisely at 3.03 Connell cleared his throat and addressed them:

"Gentlemen, I own twelve miles of ocean front land on the Jersey coast It is undeveloped, but has excellent natural advantages and can be made into a fashionable summer place. I have called you together to plan and carry out its development, in detail.

"Roughly speaking, my project is this: To wipe Atlantic City off the map by building, within twenty miles of it, an all-the-year-round resort that will be more luxurious, more colossal, more attractive to the rich than any place this side of the Riviera. This is September second; the new watering-place, which I shall call Seaside City, must open June fifteenth, next.

"You have nine and a half months in which to complete it, gentlemen. That means rush with a capital R. Spare no thought, no effort, no expense that will hurry matters and make for ultimate and complete success.

"I know what I'm about, for I've looked the situation over carefully myself. Remember that I stand back of you with the necessary funds, and that the slogan is: 'Seaside City, the Greatest All-the-year-round Resort on the Western Hemisphere!'

"Here are duplicate sets of the preliminary survey. Look them over—they will give each of you a basis on which to begin. It's up to you, gentlemen, to put it through. Lay out your plans, bring them to me with estimates for approval, and carry them out. I do not want to be bothered with details, once the work is under way. I do require, however, that Seaside City shall be ready to open on the fifteenth day of next June."

"I should like to ask one question, Mr. Connell," Harmon spoke in the grave, courteous tone that distinguished him wherever he might be. "Have you carefully considered *all* the natural features of the proposed resort? My personal experience with that section of the coast has been rather broad, and it has taught me that a peculiar element of danger is to be found in many of the low areas such as lie—"

"I *have*, Mr. Harmon," Connell's face flushed slightly, and even his carefully controlled voice betrayed his anger at this indirect questioning of his judgment. "As I told you, I have looked over the ground personally, and am entirely satisfied with it in every way. Furthermore, I must ask you to abide by my decision, since it is my capital that is involved. Do I make myself clear?"

For a moment the sanitation expert seemed about to reply, but evidently thought better of it and merely bowed in acknowledgment of the situation. He had made the effort and been promptly repulsed —that was enough.

Phillips and the rest kept their own counsel. They, too, had learned a lesson. Then Connell spoke, addressing them all again:

"That is all, I think. In everything you do, *remember*—' Seaside City, the Greatest All-the-year-round Resort on the Western Hemisphere!' Good afternoon, gentlemen."

The autumn came, passed through its glory of windless, sunny days and painted countryside, and merged into the harsh drabness of a New York winter. From time to time, as the weeks wore on, the president's room in the Amalgamated Building was the scene of secret conferences from which gray-haired, keen-eyed men emerged silent and decisive.

Great things were doing, the office force told itself; the boss was building a huge summer colony down the Jersey coast, bigger and more expensive than Newport or Atlantic City.

There were to be eight enormous hotels, so the rumor went, each costing upward of a million dollars; there were to be direct private railroad lines from New York and

Philadelphia, nine miles of cottages, special steamers for the convenience of guests, a complete electric light and power plant, and Heaven knows what else besides. Young Riddell, of the accounting department, was authority for the statement that the boss was spending half the money in the United States on this one gigantic scheme.

But the president of the Amalgamated Pumps Corporation little suspected that his dreams of becoming a second Prince of Monaco were even an occasional subject of office discussion. He was a very busy man.

Seaside City was costing a mint of money, but he would get it all back with interest, he told himself, once the giant resort was opened for business. People would flock to it in hundreds of thousands, each and every one ready and able to pay well for the luxuries and pleasures with which he would provide them.

The one thorn in President Connell's well-upholstered side was Chapman & Co. That optimistic young firm was putting up a far better fight for its life than the great man had deemed possible; their resources must have increased in some way.

Yet his lieutenants in monopolistic crime reported to him that the little organization was being pushed gradually to the wall, losing contracts, narrowing its selling field, manufacturing under increased cost. By July, said the lieutenants confidently, Chapman & Co. would be a thing of the business past, ruined, broken, crushed to a handful of dust and scrap iron.

And Connell, because he knew his competitors' end was inevitable, grunted impatiently, urged his assistants to get after them harder, and diverted another cool half million from the pockets of the Amalgamated Pumps' investors into the ever-open maw of Seaside City.

## IV.

It was the fifteenth of June. For weeks a subsidized press had been spreading from Cape Cod to Catalina, from Tampa to Tacoma, the front page tidings that this was to be the Great Day. Fanciful posters depicting a gorgeous dream city of happiness glittered alluringly from railway stations and billboards throughout the land.

Millions of car-cards, booklets and other outputs of fertile advertising brains were scattered from Coast to Coast, announcing to America's gullible eyes that on this date the Greatest Seashore City on the Continent would open its portals to a deserving world. And now the day had come.

President Connell, scanning the scene from the huge roof garden atop the Seaview Palace, nodded and smiled with satisfaction.

For miles to north and south of him the beach was black with people; thousands more thronged the six great pleasure piers, the verandas and balconies of the twenty-story hotels, the golf links, the tennis courts, the shaded walks of the Italian gardens. Five-thousand-dollar motors glided hummingly up and down and back and forth along paved drives that led to palatial "cottages" by the ocean front.

The Amalgamated's money, the nation wide publicity campaign, his own great name, a power in the social as in the business world, had turned the trick. Seaside City was an accomplished fact.

As Connell gazed he wondered if this great city of joy were in truth built on that same strip of lonely seashore waste which he had bought but a scant ten months before. To be sure, there were the same ocean, the same sea breeze and scintillating sunshine, the same broad expanse of meadows beyond which the mainland hills showed dimly blue.

But the rest? Verily, mused Connell, it was a triumph of real estate development, a tribute to the power of brains, capital and labor.

Curious, he thought, that to-day and that other one the summer before should be so similar. The east wind which now fanned across the Palace roof seemed own brother to the one which had cooled him as he sat under the cruiser's awning with Ellison.

He wondered idly if it always blew so along this marvelous coast. If it did it would mean more people during the warm months, and added millions for him.

The money, yes, that was the point! How it would roll in, a steady torrent from year's end to year's end!

There was to be a grand ball that night in the Palais de Danse, the vast open-air structure midway between the Hotel Vandivere and the Casino. It would be quite the biggest thing of its kind ever held.

Upward of three thousand couples could find room on that immense floor, and the balconies and boxes all about held undreamed of capacity for onlookers. It was to be the great event of Seaside City's formal opening, and it would start with a grand procession led by Mr. Connell him-

self and his gracious wife. The latter, so said the announcements, would wear her famous gold-leaf gown and the diamond tiara presented to her by a crown princess.

Promptly on the stroke of nine the Italian Band, which for some minutes had been preparatively grunting and squeaking to itself at one end of the Palais, struck up for the parade preceding the monster dance. The chattering groups of fashionably dressed guests dissolved, gradually forming into a serpentine line of indeterminate length that wound out upon the floor.

The music crashed and banged, flashlights flared, press cameras clicked and turned this way and that, ten thousand electric globes glittered starlike from the roof, shimmering down on bare shoulders and gorgeous gowns.

The band swung into a popular one-step, the procession disintegrated into a swirl of evening-dressed humanity. The Grand Ball was under way.

And then the wind changed.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, it shifted from east to south, from south to southwest. There it hung for a time, hesitated puffily with a strange portent of impending doom, and swung into the west.

Its tang vanished; sultry, lifeless as stale wine, it came strong and steady from the mainland, across the miles of intervening stagnant meadows. And on its wings, faintly at first, came a strange humming, a singing, insistent monotone of sound that grew steadily louder, more penetrating, more nerve-racking in its tenseness until it filled the air above the Palais de Danse, settling about it like a mist of sound.

*Spat!*—Mrs. Vanderwater Fordyce, foxtrotting with Reginald Robertson, applied her left hand suddenly to the pretty curve of her bare shoulder. *Slap!*—and she clawed frantically at an unreachable spot somewhere about the center of her back. *Biff!*—Mr. Robertson's manly paw landed with unpremeditated force upon his newly sunburned neck.

"Good Lord!" he stuttered, rudely awakened from his terpsichorean bliss. *"L-look* at them—*look up there!"*

The lights above the great floor had dimmed, obscured by a swirling, grayish haze that eddied about them like wraiths of fog, sinking lower, lower, lower toward the throng. The west wind, blowing across the countless leagues of swamp, had done its work.

The winged hypodermics, the famous Jersey eagles, had come upon Seaside City out of the night, and their coming was as that of a pestilence. The brilliant lights, the thousands of festive, evening-clad dancers, looked good to them. The mosquito hosts had mobilized; they whetted their bills, keyed their wings to battle pitch, and went to it.

V.

In the library of his modest home on Valley Road George Ellison laid down his book, yawned, and tapped the ashes from his pipe.

The evening was most unconscionably long, he thought, with the wife and youngster away for a whole week. He might as well go to bed, even if it was only nine o'clock—there was nothing else to do. Darn it all, why did he feel so sleepy, anyway?

There! Wasn't that the front door bell? Probably Annie would go see who it was. Already he heard her quick step as she passed the library.

Then voices in the hall, and the maid returned and handed a card to Ellison. He took it absently, glanced at it, and sat up quickly.

"Ask Mr. Connell to wait in the reception-room," he directed the girl. "I'll see him in a moment."

He rose, stepped to the telephone booth in the corner of the room, and called for a number.

"Hello—that you, old man? This is Ellison talking. Listen—Connell's here, and I reckon there'll be some fireworks. Coming over? What—in five minutes? All right, don't bother to knock, come right in. We'll be in the reception-room. 'By."

"Good evening, Mr. Connell," Ellison's manner was quiet and unhurried as he came into the room. "What can I do for you?"

President Connell whirled from his nervous pacing up and down and glared at the young man. In the gaslight his face looked pale and haggard, with deep, dark rings under his unsteady eyes.

" 'Do?' " he exclaimed shakily. " *'Do?'* Why, your darned piece of coast's a mosquito swamp! Seaside City's killed, dead, busted—everybody's left an' we'll never get 'em back! *You* got me into this, an' now you ask me what you can *do!"* he finished with a quavering shriek.

"Why, Mr. Connell, you are not your-

self! Pray be seated and compose your thoughts. Is the situation really as hopeless as you say? There were no mosquitoes in evidence when you looked over the land with me, were there?"

"*No!*" howled Connell. "That's just it! An' there weren't any when we opened a week ago. But the wind shifted to the west that night, blew across those infernal swamps, and the people had to run for their lives! Seaside City's killed forever, I tell you, an' I'm *busted!* Put everythin' I had, an' most of the Amalgamated's, into the damned place—now it's gone, *gone,* an' I'm ruined for life. *The Amalgamated dissolved this afternoon—my God!*"

He staggered across the room and collapsed in the depths of a Morris chair.

Quite unruffled by the outburst, Ellison seated himself opposite the flabby form of the late magnate. As he did so the hall door behind Connell opened, and Carter Chapman stepped quietly into the room.

His eyes met Ellison's with a flash of comprehension, then turned to where Connell's figure slumped in the chair, obviously unconscious of the presence of the visitor.

"Did I understand you to say, Mr. Connell," asked Ellison after a moment, "that the Amalgamated Pumps Corporation dissolved this afternoon?"

The creator of Seaside City seemed not to hear the question. His fingers were clasping and unclasping nervously on the arms of the chair. His whole body twitched, and his eyes stared dazed and unseeingly at the young man sitting there so unperturbed.

Suddenly he burst out in a hoarse, trembling shout:

"You infernal crook!"

Instantly Ellison was on his feet, all his easy, nonchalant manner gone.

"Listen to me!" he snapped. The words cut knife-edged, and in place of their former dreamy thoughtfulness his eyes held a strange, ominous glint.

"I've known about you for a long time, Connell, known you for what you are—the biggest scoundrel in American business. Charges of dishonesty come badly from *you!* If you had come here like a gentleman I would have shown you some consideration, would have offered you a subordinate position which would at least enable you to live comfortably. But under the circumstances you don't deserve it!

"'Seaside City?' What was that but just a new variation of your cursed monopolistic schemes? Yes, I know—you were going to put Atlantic City out of the running; eliminate competition; ruin hundreds of honest, hard-working men and women. And why? Simply so that *you* might add a few more millions to your pile!

"*My* land a 'mosquito swamp'? It is *not!* The only swamp in sight is government land, which you'll probably never be able to control. *That's* where they came from—from those great meadows you were stupid enough to overlook!

"Did *I* ever tell you there were no mosquitoes down there? Did you ever ask *anybody* about them? Were your eyes so blind and your brain so addled with the fever of taking money from other people that they couldn't see, couldn't imagine, what would come from those tidal flats when the wind blew from the west? Did you never hear of the legal doctrine of *caveat emptor,* you poor, conceited fool?

"Don't talk to me about crooked business—here or anywhere else! Are *you* honest, and fair and square, and aboveboard? How about your stealing the Amalgamated's money to build 'The Greatest All-the-year-round Resort on the Western Hemisphere?' How about all the poor fellows you've wrecked with your cursed Pump Trust?

"*How about Chapman & Co.,* that 'measly little firm' you were going to drive on the rocks in a month, and which now is going to be the big factor in putting the pump trade in America on a sound basis again after your years of tyranny, corruption and graft? They needed eight thousand dollars to help them through their fight with the Amalgamated, and *they got them from you*—for twelve miles of ocean front on the Jersey coast! What have you got to say *now?*"

Utterly crushed, Connell gazed in fascination at this marvelously changed young man towering so big and broad-shouldered above him. He gulped, choked, and finally whispered hoarsely:

"H-how did you know about Ch-Chapman & Co.? Who *are* you, sir?"

"Who am I?"—Ellison's voice trembled a little with the tension of the moment as Carter Chapman for the first time stepped into the range of Connell's vision—"What do I know about Chapman & Co.? Why, *I'm the Co.!*"

# His Mad Move on the Movies

by Stephen Brandish

Author of "The Name of Martin Hoffman," etc.

## The Tale of a Wild Conspiracy

**SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PRINTED.**

JAMES H. DARTON, fiction writer, wins something over a hundred thousand dollars in Wall Street as the result of an investment he has allowed his cousin to make for him a year previous. His friend, Thomas Morely, is with him when he hears the good news and has the sum delivered to him in cash. Almost immediately arrives Bostwick, partner of the father of Sibyl Dane, to whom Darton is engaged. Curtly he tells Darton that Sibyl has married another man in Chicago, where she has been visiting. On top of this comes the news of the turning down of a motion-picture scenario on which Darton had banked big. The two blows seem to turn his brain, and he proceeds to hire expensive offices from which he sends out letters and telegrams to thousands of writers for the movies, bidding them strike, and adding that he will pay their salaries out of a ten-million-dollar fund. The replies are to be telegraphed in at his expense on Thursday morning, and he sits up all Wednesday night in a state of suppressed excitement.

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### CHAPTER VI.

#### ONE THING DARTON OVERLOOKED.

WHEN one is no longer able to care for himself, it behooves one's best friend to shoulder the task. With the strange case of Jimmy Darton as his first waking thought Thomas Morely arose, bathed and breakfasted in deep meditation.

He would have to put aside his own business of picture painting for this day, too, and perhaps for several more; he would make straight for Jimmy Darton's rooms, but there was no need for great haste.

In the natural order of things and judging by his twitchy behavior last night and the chalk-and-red effect of his countenance, Jimmy had collapsed some time between midnight and sunrise. If he were able to talk or the hotel authorities knew the name of his family physician, Dr. Bill Kerrigan was in charge before this. Thomas Morely purposed undertaking the nursing of his demented friend; and so firmly was the program anchored in his mind that he stared incredulously at the man at the desk who said:

"He's out, Mr. Morely."

"Do you—do you know when he went out?"

The clerk smiled faintly.

"A little after eight this morning, sir; he

came in this morning, too—a little after four."

"Er—all right?" Morely asked.

"Quite all right, if you're talking about booze," the clerk assured him. "But he doesn't look himself by a long shot. I think —I don't know why I should say it, sir, except that you're a good friend of his—but I do think Mr. Morely has been hitting things up a bit too strenuously lately, somehow or other."

Thomas Morely glanced at the clock and winced. It was past nine now, by several minutes; if, as he firmly believed, Jimmy had been merely wandering loose for an hour or more, he might have landed under an automobile long before this or undertaken to butt a surface car from its rails.

The artist stepped quickly to the telephone and called up the American Committee's offices; and the voice of Jimmy Darton's new telephone girl shot at him with machine-gun speed:

" 'Merican C'mittee P'tection Motion Pitcher Writers! If you wish information I'll connect you with Miss Daymore. If you wish to register as joining the movement, I'll connect you with Miss Gray; please give her your name, name of your firm, amount of your salary and your home address, and ring off as quickly as possible; wire's very busy. If you wish to decline, please give me your name and the name of your firm. Ready! Hello! Hello!"

"I—I want to talk to Mr. Darton," stammered Thomas Morely.

"Too busy to talk to any one before twelve!" responded the voice, and the connection broke on the second!

Yet it seemed that Jimmy was there and at the helm, and Morely hurried away in a street-car, sober head shaking. If poor old Jim were still running along on sheer nerve and excitement and managing to maintain an outward semblance of sanity, when the collapse did eventually come it would be a holy terror.

Having encountered the usual morning block, Morely entered the offices of the American Committee just before ten and made his way to James Darton's private room, pausing only an instant to gaze on Miss Daymore, who, with a telephone set strapped over her up-to-the-second coiffure, was snapping out answers to questions; and at Miss Gray, similarly equipped and flushed with excitement, who was nodding and jabbing down endless shorthand characters, ringing off, helloing and jabbing again!

He found James Darton walking the floor, hair wild and hands waving; the unfortunate author stood still and stared for an instant before he seemed to recognize his friend; then:

"I've been framed!" he shouted.

"What?"

"I've been framed!" the author repeated frenziedly. "It's a fact, Tommy! I don't know how it can have happened, but I've been framed on the whole Pacific Coast. It's after ten now and not one single wire's come in from the Los Angeles district—not one!—not a solitary one, I tell you!"

"But—"

"There's no 'but' to it—it's cold fact, and I can't imagine how the devil it can have happened!"

Jimmy Darton snarled this out with a savage, animal grin of malice that suggested the hyena. "Some one has got wind of the whole thing," he went on, "organized a campaign to worst me and managed to get away with it, Tom! Maybe they've beaten me to it and announced a general raise of salaries all over the Pacific Coast! Maybe they've connived with the local telegraph offices and had all the wires killed! But it's past ten now and some of those chaps get to the studios by eight or before, on account of the light—and whoever did it, Tommy, I swear that I'll—"

*"Wait!"* thundered the artist. "Shut up!"

"Huh?"

"How in blazes can you expect to hear from the coast at this hour, when time is three hours slower out there?" Morely demanded. "When it was nine here, it was only six in the morning out there—it's only about seven now. Probably not a single one of them has received his night letter yet, far less—"

Jimmy Darton sat down with a thud and stared at his friend with a dizzy smile.

"Well, I'll be—hanged!" he gasped. "I never thought of that!"

"No! Because you're not able to think straight about anything," the artist said earnestly. "And that's what I want to talk to you about, Jimmy, more than all this insane American Committee stuff. Just sit back, old man, and let me —"

Jimmy Darton, quite happy again, was waving his hands even more energetically.

"Then the whole thing's a success!" he

cried. "Nothing connected with it can slip now, Tommy, because responses began to come in here at just four minutes past nine and every man-jack in the moving picture business is ready to get up and cheer."

"And join it?" Morely asked hopelessly.

Jimmy Darton's crazy laugh split the calm of the upper atmosphere. He bounced to the door of his private office and snapped his fingers at Miss Gray, one room beyond; and it seemed a prearranged signal, for the girl slipped off her telephone set and cocked an attentive ear in his direction as Jimmy Darton barked:

"How many refusals?"

"Three!"

"How many acceptances?"

The girl tapped two stenographic notebooks.

"Hilda is typing the first," she said briefly.

"Go on!" her employer commanded, stepping back to his desk. "They're lining up as fast as she can get 'em down in shorthand," he reported jubilantly to his friend. "How I wish now that I'd had three extra wires strung in overnight and put on four girls!"

"Why?"

"Get the whole thing over in perfect shape that much quicker, of course," Jimmy Darton said impatiently. "This way it may drag over until to-morrow night and—ah, Miss Peterson? Telegrams?"

"Thirty-four of them and the first list of people who have telephoned in their willingness to join the—" the starchy young woman began.

"Very well. Give me the list. Give the telegrams to Mr. Morely. Get right back to work, please," said the Napoleon of strike organizers. "That's it, thank you. Take one of the girls, Tommy—take Miss Milton—open up those wires and dictate the names, addresses and so on, to her. If any of them are asking information, hand them to Miss Smith and tell her to rush off Form A telegram to them at once. Move, old man, move!"

The insane dream clouds swirled about the unfortunate artist once more. Hands filled with yellow envelopes, he moved vaguely to the office that had been assigned to him, beckoned the busy little creature who was Miss Milton, settled at his desk and caressed his bewildered forehead.

But in Jimmy Darton's office there was no bewildered forehead to caress. The only forehead in that apartment covered a brain which ran with a speed and an accuracy more than merely incredible!

In the infrequent second or two when he paused to consider the phenomenon, the speed of that mental machine appealed to Jimmy Darton as downright breathless; the inner mechanism of his cranium worked as a theoretically perfect engine running in a bath of oil. Not normally, as he was fully aware—almost anything else, in fact!—but with a deadly precision that soothed his tortured soul.

As a rule Darton took ample time for thought, like any ordinary mortal; now no time at all seemed necessary. A minor problem of his great adventure came up; on its very heels trod the answer and Jimmy Darton was devoting his entire mind to the next detail—that was the whole process in a nutshell.

Yesterday he had fancied the brain had broken all its own past and possible future record; but never in all his life had Jimmy Darton's thoughts raced as they raced this morning!

And the best—or the worst—of it was that his planning grew more malicious each second. Small touches, each designed to drive an extra barb into the tribe of motion picture producers, leaped into being like poison flowers on the rich ground of the perverted brain; wherever possible, he put them into execution instantly.

Because the motion picture business must suffer not only for the unspeakable crime of wrecking his "Fate of the World," but also for the worse thing that Sibyl Dane had done to Jimmy Darton!

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE BLAST.

AFTER noon Darton began to realize that, despite its seeming clearness, a peculiar fog dropped down on the mind now and then. Emerging from one such brief, vague spell of seconds, Jimmy found his friend Morely standing before him, frowning anxiously.

"There's an awful crowd out there," he suggested.

"Cheering?" asked the chairman of the committee.

"They're excited, anyway—wildly excited. Scenario men, you know, and quite a gang of fiction authors. They're all talk-

ing at once, Jimmy, and they want to see you."

"I've left word that I can see nobody today, Tommy, unless it is of the utmost importance," Jimmy Darton said calmly. "You'll have to handle them. Tell them—"

"Handle 'em! I can't handle 'em!" the artist said wildly. "They want to see you and talk with you, and only for the fact that they're too decent to force their way past the girls, they'd have been in here before this. You've no idea of what you're doing, Jimmy! A lot of those men are married and have families; they're depending on their jobs to keep their children alive and clothed! Ninety per cent. of them seem ready to strike, but they want some positive assurance and—"

"Well, give it to them! Give it to them!" snapped young Mr. Darton, and, since the last shred of conscience was gone from him, he dismissed the whole affair with a sweep of his hands. "I can't loaf around out there giving assurances to a handful of weak-spined clowns afraid to risk a loaf of bread for the good of their whole profession. Hell! Look at this list—and this list—and this list! These are all people who have signified their willingness to come in and stick, without any question, and there are top-liners among them already! See here! Here's Polcher—here's Wellington Miskell himself—here's Jack Riggins—"

The artist departed, head shaking in a way that threatened to become chronic, but he did not go immediately to the outer office where, as a matter of fact, some thirty excited gentlemen were talking hard and fast and asking at regular intervals when Mr. Darton would be ready for personal interviews. Instead, Morely sat down at his own telephone and talked to the manager of a certain great detective agency, the office of which happened to be just around the corner.

Then, being made of hero-stuff, he went back to the crowd and sought to explain the invisibility of Jimmy Darton; but even as he talked three husky citizens drifted in and stationed themselves conveniently near the door that led to the inner regions.

Just before two o'clock a cheer broke from the private office. This chanced to be after the messenger-boy had arrived through the private entrance on the side corridor with a little grip filled with telegrams from the great West. They had responded, that Los Angeles crowd!

Dozens and dozens of telegrams lay before the glazed eyes of Jimmy Darton, from men he knew and men whose names he had not known to be on the list. Almost to the last one they recognized the justice of his appeal to them; almost to the last one they were willing to strike squarely on the tick of Saturday noon; almost to the last one they demanded some sort of convincing assurance that their salaries would be paid each week while the strike lasted.

Three out of the pile remembered to thank the American Committee for its great work.

Yes, and there were fiction writers in here, too, James discovered—after another of those little confused spells. Here was his old friend Murcher, author of three best sellers, prepaying a sixty-word telegram from Chicago to assure Jimmy that five thousand dollars a reel was none too much for some material, such as his own. Here was old Harry Dodvale, too, with a brief: "With you to the finish. Bless you." Here was Bill Turfton, too, with a dignified acceptance of the whole proposition and an assurance of his complete co-operation.

And there were more of them, too, but while they counted in the big game, they did not count so greatly as the movie men themselves! The willingness of that crowd to come in was what warmed Jimmy Darton's innermost being; and since they were willing, they should stay in; he would attend to that! Oh, he had arranged for their staying in!

His Form C telegram, devised only this morning, would go out on Friday night or Saturday morning and reassure all but a very few of the most skeptical as to the financial arrangements; it might even convince the skeptical few, although they did not matter; and once it had convinced, he could count on their remaining convinced for just ten days.

Such was the devilish ingenuity of Form C; and in the individual cases, where doubters refused to accept Form C as worth anything at all, it was Jimmy Darton's intention to wire a full month's salary in advance.

Beyond any peradventure, all alone with his hundred thousand and odd dollars, Jimmy Darton would lay the movie industry wide open, a bleeding wreck until his last cent should have been spent!

Thomas Morely astonished him considerably with the weary:

"Say! It's nearly five now, Jim. You're going to shut down at five?"

"I'm going to shut down when the day's business is over. Well? What's that in your hand?"

The artist leaned heavily on the desk.

"It's a tabulated list of the fiction authors who think their stuff's worth five thousand dollars a reel or more for movie purposes and who are willing to strike on that basis till the bad place freezes over," he said. "I had no idea there were so many of them, but they're with you heart and soul."

"Naturally."

"I've managed to get rid of most of the fellows who came in," the artist went on monotonously—for one must be highly temperamental and jilted by earth's fairest daughter to become indefinitely fatigue-proof, and Tommy Morely was tired to the dropping point now. "There are only twenty or so of them left now, and they—Heaven forgive me!—seem fairly satisfied that things are all right. But there's one of them you'll have to see, Jim; he just came in."

"Who?"

"Glinn!"

"Botsford Glinn?" asked Jimmy Darton, sitting up.

"The same."

"Send him in, Tommy!" ordered the chairman of the American Committee.

This Botsford Glinn, as you know, came near to topping the list of scenario chiefs; it was Glinn who produced—but you know what Botsford Glinn has produced. The thing that startled Jimmy Darton for an instant was that a personage of Glinn's importance should call at just this stage of the game; he had fancied that the big fellows would come in later, if they came at all, with a splendid chance of their remaining out altogether and standing with the producers who paid their enormous salaries.

In any case, he estimated, they were of relatively small importance; but if Botsford Glinn really wished to identify himself with the committee—

"Ah, good afternoon, Glinn," Jimmy Darton said, almost languidly.

"Howdy, Darton," said Mr. Glinn and, jerking a chair to the writer's side, sat down quickly and peered at Mr. Darton. Oddly, he seemed satisfied with what he saw, for his square chin was thrust forward as his peculiar smile appeared, and he asked sharply: "It's on the level, then?"

"Absolutely!" answered Jimmy Darton, and never blinked.

"Looks it, anyway. There must be ten thousand dollars' worth of furniture in here!"

"Seventy-two-fifty," corrected James Darton.

"As to the ten million," pursued Glinn, who dealt with essentials. "Is there actually ten million behind the thing?"

Jimmy Darton smiled a peculiar smile of his own; it was one of the most knowing, most utterly assured smiles Glinn had ever seen. Further, Jimmy Darton pushed forward a box of cigars, the fifty of which had cost precisely thirty-eight dollars and, taking one himself, lighted it and leaned far back.

"Glinn," he said slowly, "I haven't talked about this thing—yet. I have refused to see reporters or to give much more information than was contained in the letter you received this morning. But you are you, Glinn, and in perfect confidence I'll tell you that when the real names of the men behind this movement are made public, *you'll be absolutely dumfounded!*"

It was probably the truth, yet Botsford Glinn seemed to accept the words at their ostensible value. He nodded swiftly.

"You're sure you can hurt the producer, then?"

"I have cut off his supplies. You know, Glinn, the public won't stand for much more rotten stuff these days; they demand new goods and goods made right. Five years ago, very likely, you folks could have gone on producing 'Ivanhoe' and funny little trick pictures indefinitely, but what you have to have now is *plots!*"

"Don't use that 'you,'" Glinn said quietly. "I think I'm with you."

"Not sure, eh?"

Glinn expelled a puff of smoke that must have been worth about one cent.

"I'm sure, yes—if you want to satisfy me and do it. Something like this has been due for a good while, although nobody ever expected it to turn up in just this spectacular form. I'm with you if the real cash is there to back up your statements."

"Well?" said Jimmy Darton, and felt a curious little chill run through him.

"I'm not overestimating my own importance—and on the other hand I'm not underestimating it. If I come in with you publicly, it will mean a lot to you; if I come in and the thing falls flat, it will mean a lot

to me—a lot of loss. I don't like loss, Darton. I'm willing to step right in, however, on condition that you pay me one year's salary in advance, the same or any part of it to be refunded without interest when the smoke of battle has cleared."

"And about how much would that cost the committee?"

"That would set the committee back just forty thousand dollars," smiled Mr. Glinn.

After that he watched narrowly for signs of emotion on the committee's chairman. There were none at all. Jimmy Darton, staring at his cigar, pursed his lips and thought deeply.

There might be worse ways of investing forty thousand dollars than paying it to Glinn! He was known from one end of the country to the other, not only to the industry but to the public; "Botsford Glinn, General Manager," would look rather well as an additional line on that expensive letterhead.

"Well, it's like this, old chap," Jimmy Darton said slowly, and without concern. "We'd like to have you. It's perfectly possible for me to pay you your forty thousand in cash, here and now; I have the money and I'm empowered to use it as I see fit. There it is, if you'd like to look at it."

"My Lord!" gasped Glinn.

"At the same time I don't feel warranted in handing out a lump sum like that without the definite approval of—er—somebody else, Glinn. You understand that?"

Glinn, whose eyes could not leave the still untouched eighty one-thousand-dollar bills, merely nodded.

"It'll be all right; I can promise you that now, and we'll settle the thing either tomorrow or Saturday morning," the chairman went on. "But I want so-and-so's O. K. Can you lead out the whole staff with you?"

"What?" Glinn awoke, grinning. "The whole staff? I can take out half the industry, you chump! And I'm in it—d'ye hear? I'm in it to the finish. . . ."

Just why Jimmy Darton's head should be resting on his hands, he did not know, but it was there, fast enough, and Botsford Glinn had disappeared.

The chairman of the committee scowled angrily about his brilliantly illuminated office and rubbed his head. The head was aching now—aching like sixty and in the queerest way. His throat was dry, too, and his lips seemed to clack when he moved them and there was a goneness inside him that reached from his toes to the top of his skull and—Morely had come in or up or down from somewhere. He was beside the desk, anyway, and saying faintly:

"Broadbelt's here and you'll have to see him, Jim."

"The—the fellow who owns the Broadbelt Feature Film Company?"

"Yes, and when you've seen him, that ends the day!" said the artist. "It's after seven now and all the girls have gone except Miss Daymore and Miss Gray; they're about dead and the others had to quit when they did or leave in ambulances. I do —"

"Send Broadbelt in! Send Broadbelt in!" directed Jimmy Darton.

The picture producer, a slight, anemic bundle of nerves, entered on a run. He came directly to Jimmy Darton and snapped:

"Is this thing aimed at me?"

"What?"

"Is it because we've thrown down your stuff, Darton?" fumed the other and, curiously enough, took his place as the first to voice something near the truth about the American Committee. "I—I think I have a pretty good line on you, you know. I don't know whose office or whose furniture this is or anything about it, but I know devilish well that no combine of capitalists has formed to hobble the movie business. I have a strong suspicion that it's aimed at me and the 'Billion from the Sea' series we're getting ready to put out.

"I've never found anything yet I couldn't deal with," Broadbelt cried, rather egotistically. "You know that we've spent a hundred thousand already and are shy on the story-plots still, and —"

Something about him struck poor Jimmy Darton as funny. He began to laugh, and, having begun, kept on laughing, softly, crooningly, weirdly.

"How are you going to deal with this?"

"I'm going to pay you fifty thousand dollars for your American Committee!" howled Broadbelt. "That means that I take it over absolutely and that you leave the country!"

Jimmy Darton laughed on; there was something in the laugh that froze Broadbelt, for it reminded him of a maniac mother he had once seen, weeping at the grave of her only son.

"If you had fifty million dollars, you couldn't buy this committee now," crooned

Jimmy Darton. "It's too big for you—too big—too big."

"Do you mean that fifty thousand dollars —"

"I mean that I'm tired of wasting breath on pikers like you," Jimmy informed him, dizzily. "Get out, will you?"

Broadbelt faded away, a man bereft of breath. Jimmy Darton, for want of better occupation, kept on laughing.

Typewritten lists, telegrams, envelopes, eighty one-thousand-dollar bills, all danced strangely on the desk before him. He laughed at them, too. They were so funny, in fact, that he tried to catch them and hold them, before they drove him into hysterics and . . .

"*Jim!*" said the voice of Thomas Morely.

"Huh?"

"When did you eat last?" snapped the artist, as he arranged a cup of hot coffee and a little bowl of thick soup on the desk.

"I—what? Oh—last week, I guess," mumbled Jimmy Darton.

"Well, you put this hot stuff down and then we're going home!" the artist told him. "D'ye hear? *Home!*"

"Home," repeated Jimmy Darton, as he fumbled with his spoon.

"And we'll get out by the side door!" snapped Morely. "I've managed to chase every one from the offices—or we have, to be exact—but the reporters from the morning papers want an interview with you and they may be sticking around. My—my conscience! what a nightmare!"

" . . . mare," repeated Jimmy Darton, trying to swallow and wondering at the burning sensation in his throat.

"Half-past-ten!" the artist growled. "That poor little Gray kid fainted at ten and the Daymore girl began to cry so that . . . hell! Eat that soup, will you? It's doped with brandy and raw beef juice and things enough to keep you alive until I can put you to bed. Eat it!"

"I'm—eating it," Jimmy Darton whispered from the mists.

They swirled after another indefinite interval, and he found himself wondering vaguely whose shoulder was supporting his head and why a cab, which plainly was standing still, should rock so while the street lights filed past.

Another lapse, and Jimmy Darton would have protested at some one's assurance in putting him to bed, had he owned a voice, which he did not. But never from an inanimate thing had come such a siren song as issued from that glorious bed!

It lured Jimmy Darton farther and farther down into its soft, warm depths; covers crawled up and soothed his aching neck; he thought that he smiled.

The night clerk stopped Thomas Morely on his way out.

"If those other two gentlemen are going to stay with Mr. Darton, I can have another bed put up," he suggested.

"They won't need a bed," said the artist, wearily. "They're going to walk up and down outside his door. Leave 'em there!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AFTER THE STORM.

WHEN exhaustion, creeping upon one, is kind enough to bring her own antitoxin, disease and cure are likely to break about even and leave the subject near his starting point.

Thus, Jimmy Darton gazed between long, slow blinks at his typewriter desk for all of ten minutes before a tremendous yawn finally drew him up to the surface of conscious things. He rolled over on his back and stretched mightily, staring at the ceiling and trying languidly to rouse a brain still unwilling to rouse.

The chairman of the American Committee had awakened to another day! And the odd part of his awakening was that he did not leap from bed and plunge wildly for his tub and his clothes; instead, the chairman gazed at his watch, reflected that he must rise to get it and learn the time and ended by folding his hands behind his head and groaning softly.

For Sibyl Dane, the loveliest girl who had ever driven a man mad by her jilting, was married to young Rossmore of the tinplate Rossmores. She who, not one week back, had snuggled down in Jimmy Darton's arms and wished—fervently as he himself had wished it!—that she had never planned the wretched Chicago trip that would separate them for a whole ten days, had forgotten him completely and married. . . . Jimmy Darton, rolling back to his side, made his millionth effort at driving the tragedy from his mind, and directed a somewhat puzzled frown at the distant watch.

Quite vaguely and impersonally, he thought of 4444 Cirrus Building and shud-

dered a little. This morning the whole affair seemed different, somehow; it stood forth in its true nightmare aspect, mocking at the person who had fathered it!

That person, sitting up at last, paused on the edge of his bed and stared at the rug for a time. He understood, all too painfully; he understood the clear, slow, normal working of his brain and the chill which the thought of 4444 Cirrus Building brought: he was quite sane this morning!

Yesterday and the day before and part of the day before that he had been quite mad; he understood that too, causes and all. The hard fate of the "Fate of the World" had been bad enough, but Sibyl's wicked little trick was the thing that had booted gentle Reason from her throne!

Always high-keyed and likely to soar or to probe the depths on sufficient provocation, the news of Sibyl's wedding had driven him mad; the very soul of him had been obsessed with the wild desire to hurt—something, anything, so that he visited on others some of the suffering he himself had been forced to endure; and since to save him he could not even then have inflicted one second's pain on Sibyl herself, the movie business, as the victim next in line, had taken the brunt of his fury!

Jimmy Darton, viewing all these things as they ranged themselves in his still sleepy brain, whistled gently.

Charitably speaking, he felt that he might have been slightly foolish. The last day or so of his operations was still shrouded in the oddest haze, yet he had a general impression that a large number of people had signified their intention to join his crusade and that he had contracted to pay their salaries; not that he had ever meant to do it, of course, but yesterday he had been a bandit, whereas to-day he was himself.

And certainly the matter looked different this morning! Jimmy Darton, his head shaking quite like Morely's, shuffled over to his watch; an inner voice, neither particularly still nor particularly small, informed him that he was about to be disliked by many, many people in the movie business!

Thrice he stared at the watch before he could believe. Small wonder that he was sane to-day; the hands were just coming up to twelve, noon, and he had slept like a rock for fourteen solid hours. The chairman of the American Committee, having started his bath, perched on the edge of the tub and smoked a cigarette before going farther, and his mood was decidedly thoughtful.

He had made an awful little mess! Not, of course, that he had done any real damage; one little writer-man can hardly make a visible dent in an industry worth hundreds of millions.

And then, viewed in the cold light of this morning's reason, no hundreds and hundreds of scenario writers had actually telegraphed in their willingness to join his ridiculous campaign; his fevered brain had magnified their numbers, he understood now, but very likely several dozen were expecting to go out on strike to-morrow noon—and his would be the task of explaining by wire that the thing was off and later, perhaps, even having Bill Kerrigan give him a certificate of temporary insanity or something like that to back up his case.

Or—well, could he call it off so swiftly? Jimmy Darton really did not know; it might be necessary to ease the whole thing down, stretching the process over a week or two and indicating that the group of capitalists had broken up. Those details he would settle in the calm of his office in the Cirrus Building; just now Jimmy Darton found that the whole affair was detaching itself from his mind and growing more remote again with every second.

The only real horror in the world was the fact that Sibyl Dane had become Sibyl Rossmore!

A warm plunge and a cold shower do wonders; before he had nearly finished dressing, the chairman of the American Committee was aware that a new element had entered his morning: he was hungrier than he had ever been in all his life. The indefinable goneness inside had turned to a clawing, gnawing emptiness; through his side window a stray gust came from the kitchens, stories below, bringing visions of thick steaks and piled fried potatoes and plump mushrooms and asparagus.

What was almost a smile of anticipation came to his lips as he opened his door and hurried out—and collided with a tall, determined-looking man.

"I beg your pardon," said Jimmy Darton, and would have rushed on to the elevator.

"Excuse me, Mr. Darton; where are you going?" the large one demanded, laying a restraining hand on his arm.

"Well, who the dickens are you, to ask—" the writer began wonderingly.

"That's all right, Mr. Darton; I've got orders not to let you go down to breakfast, if that's what you're after," the stranger said, with his quiet smile.

"Whose orders?"

"Mr. Morely's, sir."

This time Jimmy Darton ceased his tugging and stared at the other.

"Say, who on earth are you?" he demanded.

"Hammond, from the detective agency, sir," replied the mystery. "I've just relieved Burgess, if you know him, Mr. Darton. Mr. Morely thought it was best for one of us to be right here, in case any one made his way up; your telephone has been disconnected, sir, and they're telling every one down in the office that you have left the house and given no forwarding address. But there's always a chance that somebody might break through or come up one of the hallway fire-escapes."

"What in the name of Heaven are you talking about?" the author cried.

The large man, considering him, smiled again and seemed to understand.

"Come over here, sir," said he. "No, don't pull back the curtain; they might see you. Now look down in the street, sir."

Jimmy Darton looked. There was a crowd down there—a considerable crowd—and several blue-uniformed policemen to keep them moving, too!

"Is the place on fire?" he gasped.

"They're waiting to get a look at you, sir. Some of 'em, I take it, have business to talk over with you. You see, the papers being full of it, as it were, the—"

"Full of what?"

"The great movie strike, sir, of course. Well, there being as much excitement as there is, and you that tired, Mr. Morely ordered positively that you should have your sleep out, eat breakfast in your room and then go out, if you wanted to go out, by the storeroom entrance."

Hardly stupid despite this morning's lethargy, Jimmy Darton nodded his partial comprehension and wondered why his hair seemed to stand on end.

"Get me a—a luncheon card, will you?" he said weakly. "Or I'll have 'em send up everything on the bill of fare, I guess."

Back in his room, with luncheon on the way, the cool horror of the affair surged up in him—and then died down again.

He was more than a little startled at the amount of excitement he had raised, to be sure, but that sort of thing, as a rule, is more a nine minutes' wonder than of the nine-day variety. Probably the papers had played it up heavily as a novel idea; people wanted to look at the infernal idiot who had fancied himself capable of wrecking the motion picture industry—to look at him and laugh and shout a few comments—and then forget all about him, than which he asked nothing more just now, by the way.

It was annoying, but . . . no, it had nothing to do with Sibyl and the irreparable damage she had wrought.

Jimmy Darton felt that, if he brooded on the thing much more, even his present splendid appetite would depart. Luncheon arrived in time to fend off that disaster and with it a morning paper; neither of them dulled the edge of his deeper suffering in the smallest degree.

It was incredible—it was worse than incredible! He stared dully at the printed page and found only Sibyl's sweet features, through which scareheads penetrated foggily: "Backed by Wall Street, Writer Would Wreck Movies," and "Billion-Dollar Author Prepares to Clean the Screen."

Ordinarily, knowing that they dealt with himself, he would have forgotten all else and held his breath while he read column after column; at present James Darton, in whose fingers a fragment of roll had been poised for all of two minutes, merely stared out of the window and thought of Sibyl.

Gloom was settling in on him—not so strenuously as the hysteria had settled, to be sure, but with a thick, black effect that was frightfully depressing. He yearned for the Sibyl he had known, and yearned until he fairly ached.

With luncheon quite out of the way, he stood irresolute, divided between the duty of facing 4444 Cirrus Building and the untangling of his crazy skein and the desire to see something that breathed of the departed Sibyl Dane.

In the end he strode gloomily out of his comfortable little suite and looked defiantly at his guard.

"Are you supposed to accompany me?" he demanded.

"I have to do it, sir, but I'll keep my mouth shut and not annoy you," the large man grinned. "It was Mr. Morely's orders that—"

"Darn Mr. Morely's orders!" said Darton impolitely, and would have rung for the elevator, but that Hammond stayed him.

"I'm sorry, sir, but you'll have to walk down," he said. "Those cars stop right in the lobby and the lobby's full of people that want to see you. Down this way, sir, and then out on the side street, please."

Side by side, they made the trip. The bodyguard, ordering his charge into the doorway while he summoned a cab, left Darton staring at the pavement of the alley; he was still staring when Hammond returned with the taxi; and he barked an order at the driver and relapsed into utter silence.

Just why he wanted to look at the outside of Sibyl's late home he could not tell, but he felt intuitively that it was important. Perhaps, when they came abreast of the house the nightmare would end—something told him that it must end.

Sibyl herself would be at a window to beckon him and tell him that he had dreamed it all; but for the catastrophe, she would have been home to-day. She—why, she *must* be home now!

People on the sidewalk stared at Jimmy Darton as they had never stared before; more than once his bodyguard caught: "That's him! That's him!"

Jimmy Darton himself merely watched the corners until they turned down Sibyl's block; and regarding him from the other side of the cab the bodyguard, by his own practical, simple thought processes, concluded that Mr. Morely knew more about the young man's mental condition than he had told and that it were better for him not to be alone—because now Jimmy Darton was clutching the side of the cab and staring eagerly at a house.

The shades were down, the place appeared to be closed and empty of humans. Jimmy Darton ordered the cab to stop and stared on, seeming to fell that Sibyl herself was bound to appear.

But shades, doors and windows remained quite as they were, and after a long minute Jimmy Darton sat back with a hollow groan; intuition, this time, had lied shamelessly. His dream was over. Could he but work up some of the departed venom, he would almost have liked to go on with the fell work of the American Committee scheme, so far as his capital would carry him!

As the taxi rolled on down-town, however, Jimmy Darton, meditating, knew the worst; he was utterly, hopelessly sane this morning! No amount of effort could conjure up the frenzy of yesterday; fourteen hours of dreamless sleep had cleared his vision and he saw that the spending of his unappreciated fund for the purposes of the committee was likely to buy him nothing better than a lynching when the truth came out.

No, the committee would have to die, quickly and painlessly as possible, and then he would—oh, go far away somewhere to a new country, take a new name, start a new business and try to forget that Sibyl Dane had ever been born.

This was the state of Jimmy Darton's mind when his cab halted and he asked:

"Why doesn't he go to the front entrance of the building?"

"Because from what they've been telephoning up this morning, Mr. Darton, I take it that we'll do better by going in through the private door of the trust company that's moving in here next month!" grinned Mr. Hammond. "There's an elevator running up through the building from in here, and the boss of the Cirrus said he'd put on a man for you to-day. Right in here, sir."

He piloted Jimmy Darton over piles of lath and plaster sweepings to the little bronze door in the corner of the ground-floor offices, where a bored youth waited to whirl them to the forty-fourth floor. Gloomily, the chairman of the committee stepped out and followed his guardian; gloomily—and quite unheeding of the queer hum which issued from the Cirrus's main corridor, at the end of this narrow hall and around the corner—he permitted Hammond to shove him hastily through the little door which let into Tommy Morely's office.

Thomas himself was not visible; the door to the offices beyond was closed, too, but it opened just as Jimmy Darton headed into his own sanctum, and the pretty Miss Daymore, who was not quite so pretty with the black circles under her eyes, rustled to her employer after the first start at the sight of him.

This time Jimmy Darton quickened sufficiently to note and wonder at the dull roar which came through the door as she opened it and which died down again with the click of the latch.

"Good morning, Mr. Darton," Miss Daymore said, with a curious lack of her former

vivacity. "I have opened all your mail and your wires and they're piled on your desk."

"All right," the chairman replied rather listlessly.

"And there are forty-two cards of people who want to see you—people, that is, who refused to let Mr. Morely settle their cases, you know. Most of them are waiting now and several simply insist on seeing you."

Jimmy Darton sighed heavily and nodded. After all, maybe he had kicked up more trouble than he had supposed earlier this gloomy morning.

One thing was certain, at any rate: having involved himself in the mess, he would have to take half an hour and think out some plausible line of talk. He trudged into his inner office and Mr. Hammond stationed himself at the door.

And then Tommy Morely breezed in! Even at the first, uninterested glance Jimmy Darton saw that Thomas, too, was different this morning.

Yesterday—always, in fact—Tommy had been the sleepy-eyed artist, slow of movement and thought, full enough of his own enthusiasms, perhaps, but keeping them far beneath the surface. Yet now Thomas was aquiver! His eye sparkled; his dull color had turned high, and he snapped into sight much as Jimmy Darton had snapped about yesterday.

"You look better, Jim!" he said briskly. "Thank goodness for that! I had half a mind to send Bill Kerrigan around and have him dope you into fighting shape this morning."

"Eh?"

"Because the first really big day is here now, you know," the artist raced on. "I've been doing what I could, but there are a thousand things you'll have to handle yourself, Jim! The scheme is a success, you know! All the papers concede that it has a fine chance, and most of them hail you as a sort of liberator of the whole industry, but that isn't what really counts. You know—"

"What really counts, Tom?" Jimmy Darton asked, with apathetic curiosity.

"The size and importance of the people we've stirred up, of course."

"We?"

"We!" the artist shouted, triumphantly. "You were right, old men, and I was wrong in trying to pull you back! Because this morning—"

Here he stopped, for Miss Daymore's voice had come sharply from the next room:

"Oh, *please!* Take your hands from my shoulders or—"

"Huh?" said Jimmy Darton, rising.

"My dear young woman, I haven't the slighest desire in the world to put my hands on you, but if you insist on blocking the way you'll have to endure being pushed out of the way!" announced a deep, strange voice. "I'm not going to cool my heels out there any longer, if it is true that Mr. Darton has come in. That's better!"

"You can't see Mr. Darton!" Hammond's voice contributed.

The chairman of the American Committee was at his door by this time—at his open door and staring straight at the red face of Stockwall Westling, motion picture pioneer, multi-millionaire, sole owner of the giant Stockwest Features, Inc.!

There were several people in the movie industry whose personal appearance would have startled Jimmy Darton that morning, but of them all that Stockwall Westling should have turned up!

The some-time demented writer, while he did not actually recoil, certainly backed into his office with something like alacrity. There was murder in Westling's eye!

And now Mr. Westling, having pushed Hammond back, had slammed the door and was facing Jimmy Darton with a visible effort at self-control.

"You're Mr. Darton, I take it?"

"I—am!"

The big man sat down with a thud.

"Are you or are you not in full charge of this crazy movement?" he asked.

"I am," said Jimmy Darton, unconsciously ignoring the "crazy."

A bitter smile curled Stockwall Westling's lips.

"I'm not going to ask questions about it," he said. "I'm not going to ask details about your alleged millionaire group, since I assume that you'd tell me what suited your purpose best, whether it happened to be the truth or not. Frankly, I am much inclined to think that the whole thing is the product of your own brain, backed by some deluded criminal's money. That, however, is apart. I have come here to stop it!"

Even now the sheer nastiness of his tone caused Jimmy Darton to bristle a little.

"Just how?" he asked tartly.

"I'm going to pay you one million dollars

in cash to shut up shop for good *now!*" said Mr. Westling.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A VEILED THREAT.

JIMMY DARTON'S imagination, besides being his stock in trade, had always proved a dependable quantity for private, personal use. Frequently he had pictured himself as at the wheel of a certain ten-thousand-dollar, eight-cylinder roadster, with Sibyl nestling at his side, whirling up the billiard-table drive to a palatial country place, worth at least another fifty thousand, which was their own.

Occasionally he had visualized a gray-haired, military-looking Jimmy Darton who stepped from his limousine and entered the safe-deposit vaults of a great bank, there to be ushered into a booth, with a little steel box and a pair of shears to cut away coupons from bonds; given enough successful farces and so on, he had wondered if the bonds might not some day mount up to a couple of hundred thousand.

But never at its most optimistic had the imagination stretched so far as to give a view of Jimmy Darton at twenty-eight being offered a million dollars by a man who owned several of them, simply to abandon an office and a venture of which he desired from the bottom of his soul to see the last!

This, however, was what Mr. Westling had proposed; and having proposed it he was sitting forward and scanning Jimmy Darton's countenance eagerly and saying:

"It is blackmail; I understand that. You understood it too well in the beginning, Darton, and—we're ready to pay up. That's the whole proposition."

James Darton swallowed the ball of dry hay in his throat.

"You are—er—ah—not alone in this, then?" he contrived to question.

"Several of us have combined to pay your price, Mr. Darton," the other said crisply. "Just what firms they may be is no concern of yours, I take it, so that we make it worth your while to quit."

Jimmy Darton, turning half away from his caller, frowned pensively at the patch of blue sky beyond his window. On the face of the thing, owning a conscience, he could not accept the gentleman's million dollars; that much was perfectly clear, even without thought.

Viewing the case from another angle, however, if he followed the inward urge and told the perturbed gentleman the simple truth, Westling would either believe that he lied and go on trying to buy him off, or he would accept the happy news and spread it. And while that hum in the outer office might have magnified itself in Jimmy Darton's apprehensive ears, he feared that there were still enough motion picture employees out there to—well, start something unpleasant if they found themselves fooled!

"Darton!" the visitor said sharply.

"Er—yes?"

"You can't do any real harm, you know," Mr. Westling informed him.

"Then why on earth are you willing to pay me a million dollars to stop if I can't do any harm?" the chairman of the American Committee asked blankly.

"You misunderstand me purposely," the visitor told him, and flushed a little. "You can harm us to that extent—to a slightly greater extent, perhaps, as you understand perfectly. If we combine to fight you openly, we'll lick you in very short order and at any cost, as you also understand perfectly. What we're willing to do is to admit that you've sprung something unexpected and ridiculous in such sudden fashion that you bid fair to cause us no end of bother at a time when we're all busy with big stuff and don't want to lose a day."

The chairman of the American Committee found no answer handy.

"Come, come, Darton, don't be an ass!" snapped Mr. Westling. "Admit frankly that you never expected to make a million out of it, take your money and disappear."

Jimmy Darton—and to tell the truth, for the last five seconds he had been thinking more of Sibyl Dane than of Westling—smiled faintly and shook his head. Trying to argue with this man just now was no use at all; he would have to have time for thought before he talked to anybody.

"No," he said simply.

"You're—*refusing?*" Westling gasped.

"Yes."

"Why—why, Darton, you're crazy! You can't possibly hold up the industry for more than that."

"I'm not trying to hold up the industry for a ten-cent piece," Jimmy Darton said evenly, absently almost. "I haven't asked any of you for a cent; I shall not ask one of you for a cent."

"Then what on earth are you after?"

James Darton searched his slightly befogged memory. Many things connected with his original dive into the American Committee were shrouded in a queer murk. Still:

"Er—justice!" he said firmly, remembering.

"Rot!" cried the big man.

"It may sound that way; it's what we're after, just the same."

Mr. Westling's suppressed rage had given way to a round-eyed amazement in which there seemed just a tinge of horror.

"See here, Mr. Darton," he said more gently, "we—that is, it's possible that I may raise the ante a little—a very little, to be sure."

"I tell you that I can't take a nickel of your money; isn't that enough?" the chairman asked irritably.

"And now that Mr. Darton has given his decision, why not end the interview here, sir, and let him get at the work of the day?" Thomas Morely asked this with a brisk authority that was not less than astounding. "Mr. Darton is very busy."

Westling rose with an angry jerk.

"Very well!" he said stiffly. "I'll hold that offer open until five this afternoon, Darton, should you come to your senses. You seem to believe, sir, that you're one of the deepest things alive, and to some extent you're right; but you're not deep enough to hold us up for more than the one fortune I've offered, and unless you grab it before five o'clock you'll never see a penny of that."

He jammed on his hat.

"Good-day, sir!" snapped Mr. Westling, and tramped straight out.

Tommy Morely, hurrying to the door after him, listened intently. Second after second, nothing but stillness accompanied the sound of Mr. Westling's tramp; but now, as a door slammed and they caught the rap of his heels on the tiled corridor, a low, mighty cheer rumbled up from the outer office—a mob sound if there ever was one!

Morely grinned excited satisfaction.

"That pleased 'em! They read the news in his face!" he said. "Gad, Jimmy! You took exactly the right line with him!"

Jimmy Darton looked curiously at his friend.

"Say, what's the matter with you this morning?" he demanded.

"Matter? Nothing!" Morely laughed crisply. "I've come to my senses—that's all—and I'm in the thing with my whole heart! Yesterday and before that I thought you'd lost your wits, but when I had finished reading the papers this morning and finished talking with some of the fellows, I saw that I was the feeble-minded one, Jim—and I apologize if I've been hampering you."

"But ——"

Morely sat on the edge of the big desk, eyes snapping, all of him vibrating with a sort of humming-bird effect.

"You've builded a lot better than you knew, I think," he ran on. "We've been doing some close figuring—rough, of course, but pretty comprehensive—Furbush and I and several more of the men who know. We've tabulated all the stock plots known to be in most of the safes, Jim, and we have also tabulated most of the popular books and stories of recent years which have been bought up and turned into movies. Even if the majority of current fiction writers hadn't come in this, the very cream has been skimmed from the supply and used up.

"Just now we're making a list of the real old-time stories on which the copyrights have expired, and experts are passing on their availability as movie material for the present market. When you see that list and the opinions, you'll understand how thoroughly we have them by the throat!"

"But I don't want——"

"And the thing itself that you're doing is glorious!" Tommy Morely raced on. "It's big and revolutionary and uplifting! It means that before we're through—and nobody believes it can last more than a week or so—the real brains that have been devoted to movies will have some sort of standardized, proper reward. We've pretty well decided now not to come to any agreement that doesn't include a flat division of the profits from every picture. Now I'm going to get that little Gray girl in here and when you've rushed off the answers to whatever of that pile cannot be answered by form Double-C, we'll cook up a general replay to——"

"Wait!"

"What?"

"I—I think there must be a supply of mania around here," Jimmy Darton said huskily. "I guess I left it behind last night and you've adopted it this morning, Tom. I—well, I may as well tell you frankly that as soon as I have studied out the way to do

it gracefully, I'm going to drop this whole thing!"

"Drop it!" gasped the artist.

"Like a hot brick!"

Morely laughed tolerantly.

"Do you know," said he, "I was wondering not an hour ago if a dose of plain, old-fashioned scare wasn't due to drift through here pretty soon—and get itself kicked out? You and I, ordinarily, are quiet fellows, Jim; plunging into an inspired stunt like this is bound to bring its own reaction, I suppose. But we have no time for scares now, my son; grab at your second wind and you'll find it all ready."

"I'm going to drop it," sighed Jimmy Darton.

"Why, you chump! You *can't* drop it now!" snapped the artist. "Why, Jimmy, I don't believe you realize the hundredth part of the excitement you've kicked up. You've taken a column or more of the front page of every newspaper in town, and the whole page in some of them. There were so many people around your hotel, about ten this morning, that they had to send for the reserves to handle them—and the anteroom here is packed solid now and there must be two hundred more in the corridor, waiting to cheer you and I don't know what else. They're all movie people, too, I believe, and lots of them have thrown up their jobs in advance and just joined, to be in on the ground floor."

"Really?" gasped Darton.

"Of course, really!" the artist laughed wildly. "Forget that stuff about dropping it, James; they'd tear you limb from limb if so much as a whisper of it ever left this office, and—"

Miss Daymore appeared.

"Mr. Furbush asks if you'll please give him two minutes, Mr. Darton?" she said. "He has been waiting since nine this morning."

With a slightly frightened smile, Jimmy Darton nodded his assent; ten seconds and the New Jersey scenario gentleman was at his side—and Jimmy Darton stared the harder.

Only a day or two ago, Furbush had been a modestly-clad, unimpressive individual; he was otherwise now. His chest had expanded remarkably—or was it due to the striking and very expensive fancy waistcoat? His clothes were brand-new and likewise expensive and striking; he wore glistening patent-leather shoes and spats; he wore, on the back of his head, a rakish felt hat of a type which, as yet, Jimmy Darton had observed only in "What the Man Will Wear Next Season" in one of the theatre programmes, but more than all, he wore an air of complete authority that was staggering!

"Morning, Jim!" he said briskly. "Sign this!"

"What—what is it?" Jimmy Darton asked, staring at the closely typewritten sheet.

"Memorandum of agreement with twenty-two of the boys, by which you bind yourself personally to pay each of them a full month's salary in advance! Sign here, Jim."

"But—"

"It's all right—it's all right!" Furbush snapped impatiently. "The whole thing won't cost you sixty thousand dollars and it makes them solid as rock—see? This bunch is picked, Jimmy! Get me? *Picked!* Look—look here! Here's Danberry of the Entrancing. Big man! Here's Cathcord, the fellow that did the Multiple Thrillers. They're all like that—all big men—all men we need."

"But—" Jimmy Darton began again.

Furbush laid a kindly hand on his arm.

"Listen, old man," said he, "you're tired. I knew you would be at the rate you were going, and I've planned to take a good deal off your shoulders and I'm doing it. You see, Jim, I've appointed myself a sort of assistant manager and general organizer of the gang in that outer office—and take it from me, some of 'em are like wild Indians. Ain't they, Tom?"

"Some of them," asserted Thomas Morely, with not so much enthusiasm, "are! About half of them look as if they'd been piling in liquid enthusiasm."

"Well, they're not angels—none of us are—and you can't blame the boys for getting excited at a time like this," Mr. Furbush spoke cheerfully, and quite without knowing that he was shooting small chills through Jimmy Darton. "They're waking up and perhaps the more noise they make, the better—because they'll attract just that much more attention and influence, just that much more public opinion. Public opinion's what counts in this sort of thing and, according to all the papers, we have that on our side now and we don't want to lose a particle of it. Sign right here, Jim."

"When—when do they want the money?"

"Why, right away, of course!" Furbush replied, with some acerbity. "When else?"

There may not have been actual threat in his tone, but there was something so much like it that Jimmy Darton found himself shocked back to real mental activity, if only for his own protection!

He sat up and stared at Mr. Furbush with just the degree of austere disapproval the chairman of an American Committee should use when staring at an upstart who, without a shred of authority, has appointed himself under-manager.

"This isn't a bank, Furbush," he said incisively; "neither am I to be held up by every Tom, Dick and Harry in the business simply because I made a concession in your especial case which, as you must have understood, was private and confidential. What's more, this strike isn't on until noon to-morrow; after that—er—everything will be laid wide open and every man will get what is coming to him, when the amounts have been properly verified and certified, precisely as I stated in the original letter."

"Well—that's all right, Jimmy," said the other, somewhat abashed, "but this particular bunch are all regular fellows and the kind we need and—"

"So much the better; we're glad to have them with us."

"But I've—sort of promised them that you'd come up," Mr. Furbush said. "You'd better do it, Jim. We don't want any friction now."

"We're not going to have any, except what you make," said the chairman, with an excellent imitation of yesterday's Jimmy Darton. "You'll have to go out and explain; that is all. After noon to-morrow, Larry. That's final. Nothing doing in the hold-up line this day."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE WHIRLWIND CROP.

WHEN Furbush had loitered out, with arched brows, dubious smile and shrugging shoulders, Jimmy Darton's eyes were distinctly frightened.

"What made that fool start an excitement?" he asked hoarsely.

"He wanted to help, of course," said Thomas Morely, with disconcerting readiness and some warmth. "I wish you'd get over that scare, Jim, and come down to the business of the day. We've got a big thing on our hands now and we're in it to the finish, and we'll win, too! If you want to have nervous terrors, wait till the battle's over and I may join you—it's a devil of a strain. But get down to cases now, Jimmy, because you're in shape this morning. I let you have your sleep out and you ought to be ready to lick your weight in wild-cats."

Even through several closed doors, a low rumble of sound penetrated to the large inner office. Out in the side corridor, too, people were walking up and down now and talking excitedly. Jimmy Darton shuddered.

"Say! How am I going to get out of this mess?" he asked thickly.

Thomas Morely threw up his hands disgustedly.

"Well, if you wanted to get out of it, why didn't you take Westling's million and run, you lunatic?" he demanded. "Stop your nonsense, Jim, and get busy. I understand the scare, I think, but we have no time to bother with it now. Get to work and you'll forget it in ten minutes, old man. And here's the starting-point, by the way."

"Well?"

"This bunch of statistics deals with the California crowd altogether," Morely said earnestly, as he kicked a chair to the side of the desk and snatched down a typewritten pile. "Out there, we're going to stop the whole business like a watch that has been run over by a steam roller, but it occurred to me early this morning, Jim, that we need to put some kind of clincher on them.

"You see, the producers are going to be busy as sixty, counteracting the effect of our movement, and they have the big advantage of being on the ground. What I would suggest is that we make a list of the biggest and best known men who have wired their willingness to join and—"

Jimmy Darton's telephone rang.

"Say, Mr. Darton," said the original youth, who still survived at the outer desk of the anteroom, "there's a gent out here wants to see you private for five minutes."

"Who is he?"

"He won't give no name."

"I won't see him," declared Darton.

"Well, boss!" said the boy, and his voice dropped to a whisper.

"What?"

"He's a queer-looking guy; I think he's a millionaire. He said he'd ask once to see

you and he hadn't five minutes to wait for an answer or an interview; he said if you refused to see him, that was up to you and you'd have yourself to thank for whatever happened when he went out."

Jimmy Darton looked around wildly. The spectacle of Morely, deep in papers and humming softly, offered no suggestion; Darton, somehow, felt that in his present state he could not comfortably carry about the thought of a nameless mystery who uttered sinister, veiled threats instead of demands for money or offers of millions.

"Send him in!" he snapped.

"Who is it?" the artist mumbled, without looking up.

"Crank of some kind, I suppose," replied Darton. "I want to get rid of him, anyway. Stay here."

"Get rid of him in a hurry, Jim; we've lost too much time now," Morely advised and hummed on.

Even when the door opened and closed again, he did not look up; but Jimmy Darton looked—at first with mild and dreary curiosity and then with an astonished, frowning stare that scarcely covered the sudden, nameless alarm within him.

It was not that the stranger was big or threatening or wild-eyed. On the contrary, he happened to be a rather short, thickly-built man of forty-five or fifty.

He was smooth-shaven and very dark; the colors of his raiment were sober, too, but Darton's quick eye noted that the clothes themselves were of exceeding and exclusive richness; and even his limited knowledge of such things told Jimmy Darton that if the stranger had ever bought that single diamond in his necktie—or was it actually an electric light?—for less than five thousand dollars, he had secured a mighty bargain!

For several seconds the diamond held all his attention; the attention was just wandering to the stranger's costly new gloves and slim, polished stick, when the stranger's eyes opened suddenly and looked straight at Jimmy Darton.

Up to that instant, the chairman of the American Committee had fancied them rather soft, vague eyes. Now he *knew*—just what? Had his life hung upon the answer, he could not have told; yet James Darton felt wholly convinced that if ever a fellow man executed the death sentence upon himself, that man would have eyes exactly like the stranger's!

They were small, black, utterly without mercy; unlike most small eyes, they were perfectly fathomless. They looked hard at Jimmy Darton and then looked through him; and turning somewhere behind him, they seemed to plow through him again from the back, all the way leaving twin trails of fear-frozen tissue.

It was ridiculous, of course, but Jimmy Darton felt just that.

"You—er—wished to see me?" he came near to stammering.

"I see you now," the stranger answered easily.

Jimmy Darton shook himself together.

"What's your name, please? I'm pretty busy to-day," he said crisply

The stranger's teeth, white and sharp, showed for an instant in a faint smile.

"I guess you know me," he mused.

"Guess again and you may hit it. I don't."

"Ah! So much the better, then," the stranger said, while Jimmy Darton fought down the wholly crazy idea that he was in conference with the Evil One, who had come to make some sort of a dicker with the founder of the American Committee.

Just now, by the way, the stranger was watching him through lowered lashes, piercingly, burningly, as he added softly: "You are trying to do a good deal of harm, are you not?"

"I'm trying to do what I'm trying to do," Darton said lucidly. "Just what is your connection with the matter?"

"A very definite one, Mr. Darton," the soft voice assured him. "I am the—ah—representative of several of the firms you seem most bent on injuring."

"What sort of representative?"

"Um—legal, possibly. Possibly not," said the mysterious one, and tapped the tip of a dull kid boot with his stick and smiled down its length. "Since, in the first place, you haven't recognized me, why bother about the sort? Let it be enough for you, young man, that I *do* represent some very powerful people and that they have asked me to call here with a very definite and final message to you."

In spite of his very best efforts a little shudder ran through Jimmy Darton; and it was absurd—damnably absurd! He sat stiffly erect and tried to summon a penetrating stare like the stranger's as he said:

"If it entertains you, I should like very much to beat about the bush indefinitely,

but it happens that this is my busy day; and if you can make it convenient to deliver your message and then hurry away to the other things which doubtless need your attention, I shall be grateful!"

This time the shudder became visible, because the stranger's meditative smile vanished in an instant and he was looking straight at Jimmy Darton—straight and unwinkingly, with eyes that barbed his every word.

"Very well, sir," said he. "It is short, this message of mine. You will discontinue all operations here, permanently, within the next two hours, or the operations *and yourself as well* will be discontinued!"

"What?"

The eyes bored on.

"This New York is a big town; if you quite understand how easily and how frequently the mere individual drops out without leaving so much as a bubble on the surface of the six millions, you would realize its bigness and the conveniences it affords in cases like your own," the stranger continued pleasantly, in a blood-curdling monotone. "Undesirable people, Mr. Darton, frequently start for their offices, leave home for the theatre, even go out to mail a letter —and cease to be! Sometimes they turn up in the river; sometimes they are found in the park and lugged off to the Morgue; more frequently they do not turn up at all. In your case I feel quite safe in saying that, unless your American Committee has wound up the last detail of its business by five this afternoon—it is now almost three —you, its chairman, will—er—cease to be!"

*(To Be Concluded.)*

# Heredity Takes the Count

by Berton Braley

HE walked with perfect dignity and control, too much dignity and control for so young a man. Youth should move with a little more careless ease.

Also, when Delia Dean looked up from the table where she was arranging her plates of Filigree Biscuit, she observed that there was a certain pained and strained intensity of purpose in this very precise and dignified carriage of the young man. It required concentration.

"Good morning, fair Hebe," quoth the boy, for he wasn't much more, "Goo'-mornin', sweet handmaiden of the gods, brewing the drink thash—that cheersh, cheers, I mean, and not inebriates. Would you mind shlip—shlip—"

He stopped for an instant and then finished, slowly and with painful precision, "slipping me a cup of that beverage?"

"Not a bit, brother," replied Delia, "I think a cup of cocoa and a biscuit or so would do you good. Here you are."

She handed him a dainty cup and saucer filled with creaming cocoa which he accepted with unsteady hand. In spite of his "austere control" he swayed on his feet. He spilled some of the drink as he raised it to his lips and when it proved slightly hotter than he had expected he dropped the cup from his trembling fingers.

For an instant he surveyed the wreck with eyes which focused only by a severe effort, then he said:

"Sorry, awfully sorry! Carelesh—careless shump—chump, I mean! I'll pay for it."

"Never mind," said Delia, "I guess the company can stand for that cup. But say," she blurted out, "it's really none of my business, but haven't you got this awfully early in the morning?"

"Got what?" demanded the young fellow.

"What you came in here with," crisply replied Delia, "the outward and visible signs of a large and luxurious inward stew. It's bad enough for a toper of forty, but for a boy your age—well, mama ought to spank. Age 21 or thereabouts—and a load at nine A.M.!"

"Oh," the youth replied casually and with just a hint of pride, "thish—this, I mean, was left over from lash—last night."

"And you're all swelled up over it, of course," Delia commented. "Somebody told you you were a regular devil and one of the most promising members of the paresis club, so you figured you'd show them a little real class in the line of alcoholic acceleration."

The young chap came closer to the table and gazed rather languishingly at Delia.

"I *am* going an' awful pashe—pace," he admitted, " but it's because I'm lonesome. I ain' got nobody to love me. But if a nishe—nice li'l girl like you would give me sympathy an' affection, perhapsh—"

"Excuse ME!" Delia interrupted. "I'm off the guardian angel stuff. It won't do. You want to be petted and sympathized with and forgiven for being soaked. Not me, I'm too busy. You look like a nice person, but you smell like a bar, and this store has no liquor license. So blow along, brother, before we are arrested for having liquor on the premises."

He blew along, rather unsteadily.

"That's what comes of being the village cut-up," Delia observed sagely, half aloud. "After they get through the practical joke stage they start the souse thing. And then they show up with a bundle at nine A.M. and try to flirt with honest working goils—and the finish is paresis or the pen."

At exactly nine o'clock the next morning Delia looked up to see the same young man standing before her table. This time he was frankly unsteady and his eyes were slightly bloodshot.

"Stewed again," he declared cheerily, "and this time it's a new one. My tongue is under perfect control, but I am 'ondacently drunk in me legs.' I acquired this in your special honor and I shall go down to the office where I am supposed to work, brilliantly irradiated in celebration of meeting Miss Delia Dean. Is this not a lovely souse for so early in the day?"

He waved his cane dangerously near the cocoa boiler and by that effort lost his balance, catching himself just in time to avoid overturning the demonstrator's table.

"There's a door right behind you," said Delia, "and if you turn around quickly and start for it you may make it in three tries. This would be much better than to have the husky potato juggler throw you out."

"Ah, but why so unsociable," asked the boy. "Am I not to have a draft of cocoa this bright and beautiful morning, a deep draft of creamy cocoa to soothe my fevered brow? Cocoa for the coco!"

"You are not," Delia said, decidedly, "and I wish you'd go away. You are shutting off the beautiful sunlight from me and filling the atmosphere with the scent of various drinks whose aroma displeases me. And if I give you a cup of cocoa you'll drop it again. Besides, I hate to see small boys drunk so early in the morning."

"Oh, very well, very well," replied the young man, "I go, but with a deep sense of injury and regret. Perhaps, however, I shall return anon or earlier."

He waveringly withdrew.

"Isn't it too bad about that young Roberts?" said one of the two women whom Delia was serving with her samples. "I met him just as I was coming in the store and he smelled disgracefully of liquor."

"Well, what can you expect?" rejoined the other. "Of course it's too bad—but you know his father drank heavily. It runs in the family. Everybody's been expecting it would develop in Harold, and I, for one, am not surprised."

They finished their cocoa and biscuits and moved on to another part of the store, leaving Delia to her thoughts and her work, which kept her busy for the rest of the day.

For her pretty head was occupied with the problem of Harold Roberts while her hands were serving food and her tongue was fluently praising it.

"There was a young fellow in the store this morning," she remarked at the supper table in her boarding-house that evening, "named Harold Roberts. Seemed to be a nice sort of boy, but he was slightly er—er, elaborated. Does anybody know him?"

"Such a pity, isn't it?" sighed the landlady. "A real nice boy, I know him well. What a heritage—his father drank, you know! The drink habit just born in the boy as a result."

"Well," said Miss Egan, the high-school teacher, "I maintain that it was the boy's own fault. He'd been told often enough what drink would do to him, he'd been warned about it and everything was done so he would know the danger of touching it. But he just deliberately started drinking."

"'Deliberately started,' is good," Rohn, the bank clerk, commented, "when you have to fight it away from you all the time in this town. Saloons selling to minors and women and everybody—and a saloon on about every corner, too. What's the use of warning a boy against booze and then advertising that he can get it in twenty different places?"

"That being all settled," suggested the floorwalker in the only local department store, "what are we going to do this evening?"

"Go to the movies," suggested the bank clerk.

"Aw, gee," said the floorwalker, "I'm tired of films. Besides, they hurt my eyes. I'd like to play pool, but the tables in that poolroom have got enough hazards for a golf course. I'd like to dance, but I haven't any girl—and if I had there isn't any place to dance. It's too dark to play tennis—the courts aren't kept up, anyhow, so—"

"So we'll go down to the cigar store and play pinochle," decided the bank clerk. "And they wonder what drives a young man to drink in this burg! Nothing to do till to-morrow and very little then!"

Delia Dean looked thoughtful, but said nothing.

When Harold Roberts came into the store the next morning, however, sober and sorry, and apologized for his two former visits, Delia broke out with:

"Forget it, Mr. Roberts; you didn't do any harm. But if you really want to apologize you can do it by taking me to a picture show to-night. I know it's very bold and forward of me to propose this, but what can you expect of a rough 'woikin' goil' when she's lonesome and 'ain't got no jumpman friend'?"

Her smile and her manner were very different from her words.

"Why, of course I'll take you, if you care to go with anybody like me, Miss Dean," the boy replied. "But I must warn you that most of the local girls aren't allowed to go anywhere with me and that you'll probably lose your reputation."

"I notice a girl's always in danger of losing her reputation when she does anything human or interesting," Delia remarked oracularly, "but I'll take a chance. What's a reputation between friends?"

## II.

Young Roberts, who had met no one of Delia's type before, tentatively essayed to put his arms about her when they were seated in the darkened picture-house that night. Gently she pushed the arm away and leaned back against the seat.

"In the first place," she said pleasantly, "I'd be uncomfortable, and in the second place I'm not interested in spooning with you in the first place. So let's can the sentimental stuff."

"Well, I didn't know," explained Roberts. "Lots of girls expect it."

"Quite right, quite right," Delia agreed, "but you see I'm 'yahs and yahs' older than you and my sentiments toward you are quite maternal. In fact, I am planning on reforming you. Wouldn't you like to be reformed?"

"Sure I would," the boy laughed, "but just think, if I *had* reformed I wouldn't have wandered into the store stewed, and if I hadn't been stewed I wouldn't have had to apologize, and then I probably wouldn't ever have had a chance to take you to the movies. So I'm glad I haven't reformed up to date. Otherwise I'd have missed a delightful acquaintance and you'd have had no chance to make me over. It'll be some job, anyhow."

"Why?" Delia asked.

"Because I'm doomed, I guess," the young man replied, more seriously. "I've got a hereditary appetite, they tell me."

Delia said nothing; she had a premonition that Roberts would say more if she was silent.

"Why, say, you know," he went on after a moment, "from the time I was four years old they've been warning me not to touch booze. They've told me how my dad used to sop it up and what it did to him, and they've said that his father or uncle or something was the same way; and my mother and my aunt and all my male and female relatives have preached 'No Booze' to me all my life. But they overdid it. They hammered it into me too hard. I was warned until the idea of drink fascinated me. And while they were warning me the stuff was being sold everywhere about me, and fairly thrust at me on every corner. I got so I'd stand in front of saloon windows and just gloat over the different bottles of gin and whisky and wine they had on exhibition.

"I guess everybody has picked up a bottle of poison at some time or other and been tempted to drink it just to see if it would really harm him. Well, I felt that way about booze—and I finally tried it."

"I suppose it *would* work that way," Delia mused, averting her eyes from the Charlie Chaplin film which had been thrown on the screen—she did not care much for Charles—"but I wonder if curiosity was all of it. Do you like your work?"

"No, I hate it!" the boy declared, fiercely. "I don't want to be a lawyer, I want to write advertising. But the only way you can get anywhere in that business is to be in the big cities—and the folks wouldn't let me go. Said the temptations were too great. So they've kept me here and I have this job in a law office and I hate it! There isn't much to do—I'm supposed to read law, but I don't, because it makes me sick—and when I'm through nights—well, you know what there is to do in this town. And I feel sour and disgusted and generally dissatisfied with life—and I drink. And of course everybody says 'I told you so'—and I guess they're right. It was bound to be that way. My father was a lush and I reckon I inherited the taste. Anyhow I've got it."

"Did you ever actually *try* to write advertising?" Delia asked. "Or did you just think you'd like to try it?"

"No, I've tried it. I—I've got some of it home in a drawer of my desk and—and I've got a heap of it stuck away in the office. Once I went to the hotel when a big advertising man from New York was here and showed him some of that copy, and he said my ideas were pretty good and to keep on working at it, but I guess he was just kidding me along because he wanted to be nice."

"Who was he?" Delia queried.

"His name was Fink, Henry I. Fink. He was with—"

"Henry Fink!" cried Delia. "Why, boy, he's the biggest, he's the keenest—well, you show me some of that ad copy of yours to-morrow, will you?"

"Aw, I guess it isn't much good," the other protested. "It would only bore you. Nobody here ever wants to hear me talk about it and—"

"Nobody here seems to have much sense about you anyhow," Delia observed. "You bring me some of that copy to-morrow evening and you can just talk your head off about it. And if you have any ideas that you think would improve Filigree ads, shoot 'em along!"

"I have," the boy enthused. "I've been following that Filigree advertising for a long while, just as I have most other big national advertisers. And I've got one or two hunches on ways I think it could be made better."

"Our advertising manager gets $25,000 a year for knowing good copy when he sees it," Delia commented, "and if you have the stuff—"

"I have, I have," young Roberts replied, quite forgetting his former modesty, "and if the folks here would only give me a chance—"

The rest of the sentence was drowned in the voice of the ballad singer, who attempted to make up in volume what his tones lacked in all other qualities. The noise was so great that Roberts and Delia Dean arose and went away from the picture-house.

"Don't forget to bring the copy to-morrow night," Delia reminded him, as he left her at her boarding-house.

"Forget it? Well, hardly!" half-shouted Harold.

"And say," Delia came down the steps and put her hand on his arm, "better not go down-town and join the boys to-night. You'll need a clear head if you're going to work on that new Filigree dope."

Roberts flushed.

"Honest, Delia," he said, quite unconscious that he had suddenly used her first name, "I don't want a drink to-night. I

just want to go home and see if that old stuff of mine can't be made into something."

III.

"WELL?" queried Roberts, as Delia finished the last page of the copy he had brought her.

It was a heterogeneous mass of stuff, written on scratch pads, legal cap, office letter-heads, wrapping paper and on the backs of envelopes—typed, penciled, inked, crayoned. It was all shapes and sizes.

"Harold," said Delia, enthusiastically, "it reads mighty good to me. Of course, it wouldn't do just as it is—it's amateurish in spots, but it has IDEAS behind it—and this Filigree stuff you've doped out is an entirely new sort of advertising copy, or else I've forgotten all I ever knew."

"Hooray!" shouted Harold. "Then I have talent for the advertising game, have I?"

"Surest thing you know. But you can't do much with it here. You've got to hit for the tall buildings and the noisy streets."

Roberts slumped in his chair.

"Aw, what's the use?" he said. "Mother wouldn't let me go—and the aunts and uncles would have a fit. They think I'd be ruined if I went to the city."

"Listen, son," Delia commanded, sitting very straight and looking as stern and portentous as a pretty girl of twenty-three or so can look; "your folks have molded your career for you so far—and what have they done with it? Putting it straight, as from man to man, they've kept you here in a two-horse town where there are mighty few counter-irritants to booze, where the saloon and the corner cigar store are the only places you find really live company, and then they've told you not to drink. They haven't let you do the work you want to do, they've made you stick at something you hate—and then they've told you not to drink. They've pounded it into you all your life that you were a drunkard's son and bound to go the same way—and they've warned you not to drink.

"And what have they made of you? A fine incipient souse at twenty-one, a small-town stew who comes rolling into a store at nine o'clock on two successive mornings, steeped to the eyebrows. Getting drunk at night is bad enough, but when a boy your age is polluted at nine A.M. he's on the toboggan and slipping fast.

"Can the big town do any worse for you? I don't see it. The big town will give you a chance to do the work you want to do, and it won't know anything about your father or mother or anybody else in your ancestry and it won't care. It'll only ask, 'Well, what can you DO?'

"Nobody'll shoot moral lectures into you. They'll just make you work to hold your job, and if you get spifflicated and aren't fit to perform you won't have any allowances made for your past—you'll be canned. But the big city will give you your chance.

"Of course the bright lights shine and beckon, but they don't necessarily beckon you to get full; they beckon you to dance and eat and watch other people do the same. And there is plenty of amusement, too, that won't cost you anything.

"Do you think you could stand all those terrible temptations if I wrote to Latson, our advertising man, and asked him to give you a job?"

"I could try," said Harold.

"All right then, I'll take a chance. I'll write Latson to-night and meantime you make ready to beat it if I land you the job. Ordinarily I don't tell people to deceive their parents, but on this occasion you be ready to vanish when I give the word—and leave mother to me. Are you game?"

"You bet," declared Roberts, and a handshake sealed the compact.

IV.

"ARE you Miss Dean?" demanded an angry-looking woman as she stopped before Delia's table.

"Yes indeed," Delia confessed, "what can I do for you, Mrs. Roberts?"

"How did you know I was Mrs. Roberts?"

"My fatal gift of clairvoyance," Delia laughed, and then, more seriously, "Of course I was expecting you to look me up, after Harold sent that note I told him to write you."

"You're a wicked and bold woman to lure my son to the city," Mrs. Roberts raved. "He's been brought up in a good Christian home and in a peaceful town where he wasn't exposed to temptations and where he was under the watchful eye of his own people—and you—you've sent him to the very gates of hell!"

"Listen, Mrs. Roberts," said Delia coldly. "I know you're excited, and I know I'm merely a demonstrator and a working girl

and that I have to stand a good deal that home girls don't have to put up with, but believe me, you'll have to put the damper on that line of stuff.

"I'm not a bold wicked woman and you needn't call me one. I'm not slipping any vampire stuff over on your son, I've just got him a job in New York writing advertising. And I told him he'd better go while the going was good and before you or the others had a chance to talk him out of it. Harold's a fine boy, but he was promising to become the town's pet drunkard—to put it roughlike—and it was all because everybody expected him to, and because he wasn't doing the work he liked.

"Now all they know about him in New York is that he can write advertising a little, and if he makes good at that they don't give a whoop about his hereditary habits or anything else. And since he can't do his work decently and drink much, I'm betting he'll cut the booze to make good in the work. He'd rather lose the alcohol than the job."

"Well, you can talk and talk," the mother declared, "but I know you've made my boy turn against his mother and may the Lord forgive you for that—because I won't."

"Unless I'm a heap mistaken in that boy of yours," Delia said, "you'll not only forgive me, but in six months you'll thank me. And when you get ready to do that—here's my card, 'Delia Dean, Filigree Biscuit Company, New York.' Write and say, 'Thank you' if my prophecy proves true. Will you do that?"

"I'll do that," the woman promised, "if my boy comes out all right. But I don't expect ever to write it, for the city will ruin him."

Dabbing at her eyes, she left the store.

V.

THREE months later Delia found the following letter in her mail, forwarded from New York:

DEAR DELIA DEAN:

Haven't had an edge for two months. I'm too busy and I can't afford it. Besides, I haven't any village souse rep to keep up. Another thing that helps is that I know a bunch of live fellows here who can spend an evening without getting tanked. And there's a nice little girl I take to shows occasionally.

I really haven't any time for booze fests. There was one big spree about a month after I hit the big town, but the next day I was all in and couldn't work for sour apples, and Latson said "Never again for yours, or off the pay-roll you go." And I like my li'l job too well. You've proved some guardian angel after all. Mother is visiting me now, and she asked me to put this note in the letter.

Sincerely,

HAROLD.

The note read:

DEAR MISS DEAN:

You were right, I was wrong. Thank you.

ANNA ROBERTS.

"And besides all that," Delia remarked to herself cheerfully, "that new ad copy along the lines the kid suggested is boosting sales a-plenty."

She patted herself serenely on the head.

"Me and Destiny," she added, "certainly do some neat work."

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## MY ROSE

A ROSE is she! Her eyes the sparkling dew
That falls at eve from out the heavens blue.
Her cheeks the petals are—sometimes I think
No roses ever were so sweetly pink.

Her smiles, the circling buds, fair promise of
A later bloom in floral gifts of love.
Her glances are the rose's greetings fair
In graciousness to all that wander there.

The rose's fragrance lingers in her tress,
A mingling of a sunbeam and caress—
And like a regnant queen upon her throne
She rules the garden of my heart, alone.

And, finally, this likeness to complete,
When this my Rose and I do pace the street,
I even find the thorn—that shaft of dread
With which she spikes her bonnet to her head!

*John M. Woods.*

# From Dusk to Dark

by George M. A. Cain

Author of "Four Speeds for Forest Hill," etc.

## A Mystery Story of Unusual Trend

### SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PRINTED.

MORRIS BALLARD, motoring with Helen Rainsford, stops at a rather forlorn-looking house to get a match with which to light his lamps. He does not come back, and Helen can find no trace of him. What happens is that when the door is opened two men attack him, one of whom Ballard fells. He lies still, and to protect him from the consequences of the murder, the other two hurry Ballard away in a motor-boat. One of these men turns out to be David Brink, the copper king, who takes his quasi-prisoner to his luxurious home, where it is made known to him that he is to marry Brink's daughter Florence. She is a pretty girl, whose successive engagements to four other men have been mysteriously broken off.

Seeing no possibility of winning Helen, whom he really loves, Ballard acquiesces in the arrangement, and then receives a message from H. B. Van Cleef, Florence Brink's latest suitor, saying that he is coming to see him. Returning that night in a motor from New Jersey with Brink, as they are leaving the ferryboat, Ballard finds himself face to face with Helen.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE DARKNESS OF TOO LATE.

NOT until afterward could Ballard analyze all he felt and all he seemed to see in that moment's vision. Not until afterward did he comprehend that the reason he had missed the light in Florence Brink's eyes was that he had seen it always, though he had not known it, in Helen's; or realize that he knew it now because he had looked for it in another's eyes and not found it.

What he saw in that moment was as the vision of a flash of lightning that shows us all at once where things are and leaves us to do the identifying by memory.

He saw, knew subconsciously; and his heart leaped to the knowledge that Helen loved him. He could think that out and turn the heart knowledge into mind knowledge at his leisure.

What he sensed in that moment was that he had found her—found her as he had never found her before. He had seen her soul, the spirit of her love for him, to which he had been blind before, because he waited for formal expressions on her lips and her lips had been sealed by a diffidence so little greater than his own that he should have been the readiest of all men to see through it.

And finding her, his heart raised the cry to his lips, her name. To have pronounced it would have seemed to him then a whole declaration of his longing, his undying love.

But he did not pronounce it. Between him and the woman sat the man who had torn them apart. The man had seen her.

And that man, capable of a consideration for her which could halt the flight of that first dark night to telephone and allay her fears, was capable also of dragging her name into a murder trial, was capable of a thousand other things, how much more desperate than this God alone could know.

But Morris knew enough—too terribly much—from his own experience.

She must not let Brink hear her speak to him, must not let the old man see that look in her eyes, must not catch the number of the car or any means which might lead her into the danger of efforts to find him again.

All this Ballard had thought out when the danger did not impend; now he felt the danger a thousand-fold more keenly than he had ever known it.

Automatically his hands and feet did the things necessary to drive the car with a leap from the spot. That he had acted none too quickly was evinced by the voice of quick fury with which Brink turned upon him.

Fortunately the car ahead had just begun to move sufficiently to leave space for a quick twist of the front wheels to get the runabout past it.

Across the wide thoroughfare Brink left a stream of profanity like that with which he had finished the telephone conversation at the end of Morris's first evening with him. Half a block he continued it up Christopher Street, toward which Ballard had headed by mistake in the confused haste of getting away from Helen.

Then suddenly he gripped Morris's arm and pointed to a man walking up the sidewalk.

"I want to see him," he said fiercely.

He called to the man as Morris reached the curb.

"This is your fault," he snarled, "you—" but his epithets were unprintable. "Why didn't you signal to me? Why did you let that happen? What do you mean?" he bellowed.

"I—I didn't even see you," the man protested, indignation in his voice. "Mike was there to pick her up when she took the ferry. How could I know you—"

"Yes—how could you know?" Brink screamed his fury. "How could you be expected to know anything? But you'll know one thing to-morrow morning. You'll know you're looking for a fresh job. I'll attend to that for you. Go on, Morris."

Detectives!—following Helen!—dogging her every step! Morris's gorge rose as never before.

"Look here, Brink," he snapped, addressing the man in a manner he had hardly dreamed he could dare—"I want that stopped. It's a confounded outrage. If it affords you any comfort to keep an army of men dogging my every step morning, noon and night, go right ahead. It's your game and you're paying for it. I don't care how you play it with me. You beat me long ago.

"But you're not going to keep those slinking curs padding around after that young lady. I'm going to marry Florence. My promise to her means more to me now than all your threats.

"Only two people in this world could stop me from marrying your daughter now; they are yourself and Florence. And I want to tell you there are mighty few things you can do that will come nearer stopping me than to keep those infernal hounds on the trail of an innocent girl who couldn't prevent my marriage if she would, and would be the last person to try it if she could."

"Oh, she wouldn't, eh?" came the sharp retort that Morris least expected. "She wouldn't try to stop you. She'll only drag herself from a sick-bed to go to work and earn money to pay detectives to look in every asylum in America for you, because you, like the darned fool you are, told her such a tale of your wonderful luck that you made her sure you were loony.

"When that fails, she'll only spend days and nights walking the slummiest streets of this town, eying every passer-by who looks as down-and-out as she's thought you must be, peering into dirty sweat-shops, rotten lodging-houses, foul-aired missions, sailor's hotels, crimp's offices—

"She'll only wreck her health until she can walk only by the fevered energy of her desire, until she—looks as you saw her. But when she finds you she'll let you marry another woman without an effort to stop you! You know a lot about it. You—"

Lucky for both of them that Hudson Street was empty from curb to curb. For Morris guided the car by instinct rather than by sight.

Eyes, ears, mind itself saw and heard only the raving old man. Senses felt only the torturing certainty that the words were true. At length instinct moved his hands to stop the car while he cried in a fury hotter than that of the furious man he addressed:

"You disgrace to the devils that own you! You monster turned loose from hell! I'm going to kill you—kill you! Curse you! Curse you!—"

"And make the lady happy at your death in the chair," rejoined the millionaire, his raving checked and replaced with the jeer of triumph.

"You've known what she was suffering! You've let her suffer! Curse—"

"She isn't my daughter," Brink retorted to this. "Now—don't stop the car again. Go on."

Morris sank back into the seat from which he had half arisen. The commanding tone of the other was sufficient for nerves strained to the breaking-point—the tone, and the knowledge of the man's perfect power to execute the threats he uttered.

He shifted the wheel and the car took the slight turn, crossing Reade Street and swinging into Broadway.

Beaten! Beaten!—and Helen loved him with a love like this!

Brink's manner suddenly changed completely. His voice was soft and fairly mournful:

"God knows I hate to have to do it, Morris. It's only four days more. Then I'm going to put her where she'll never need to wish for anything again. I've already arranged for an annuity of ten thousand a year to be paid as long as she lives. I—I hope I can be generous as well as cruel.

"She's seen you now—knows that you're not in want or misery. Maybe she'll stop worrying. I'd have had you write another letter, if I'd had any hope from it. She wouldn't have believed you. If you can think of anything you could telephone her to help her, go ahead. It's too bad.

"And her father—he's spent about all he owns. His daughter—I guess we all love our daughters more than anything else in the world. But no man ever loved his daughter as I love Florence!"

He ended with a tone of utter conviction that was a pitiful reflection of his mental weakness on the subject. Obviously he thought he was wholly vindicating his terrible course of action.

Without another word Morris put him down in front of the great building in which he had his offices. Only once had he seen the man's step so feeble as now it carried him across to the barred gate a watchman, evidently more or less accustomed to his comings and goings, was already opening.

Then Morris turned his car up-town toward his hotel, his mind a chaos of emotions which refused to conceive a message with which to comfort the woman he loved but might not marry, his heart one great, leaden ache for the love that must be lost to him.

He had quite forgotten the coming of Van Cleef until a weatherbeaten, gaunt young man arose from a seat in the hotel lobby at a signaling glance from the clerk, and addressed him—

"Mr. Morris?—I am Van Cleef."

Ballard hardly touched the hand the other extended, hardly noted the searching look in the man's sunken eyes. In silence they had gone half the distance to Morris's apartment before he remarked that his guest had evidently but recently been a very sick man.

Inside the apartment Van Cleef declined to remove his overcoat. He seemed impatient of the presence of Horton, fairly feverish with the desire to speak to Morris alone.

Morris bade the valet leave the room, and asked his caller to be seated. The man might have been deaf for any sign he gave of sitting down. He eyed the door until it was shut, then faced Morris again.

"You are going to marry Florence Brink," he said swiftly.

"Yes," Morris answered calmly, indifferently.

He could bring no interest to the interview now that it had come. He wanted it to end quickly—so that he might think out what to telephone Helen Rainsford.

"Do you know all about her?" the strange young man demanded.

Once more Morris felt a spasm of hope. Before it had died he had answered with another query:

"Just what do you mean?"

Van Cleef seemed ready for this.

"Do you know why I did not marry her?" he fired back like a quick lawyer in an effort to cross-examine a witness into some damaging admission.

"No," Morris answered, though the spasm of hope was already dying. "Why didn't you?"

"Because I was a little the most infernally conceited, convention-bound fool and the worst cad the Almighty ever made," the man cried.

It was a veritable explosion. For a moment after it neither man could think of anything to add to it. Then Van Cleef began again:

"I want to ask you some questions. They aren't the least of my business—only I must have the answers. Listen:

"Is your regard for Miss Brink such that you would marry her if you learned that her father was a murderer? Would you marry her if you knew that?"

He would have repeated the query a third

time in his overwrought eagerness had not Morris nodded the answer:

"Yes, I should marry her quite the same."

"Would you marry her if you knew her —her mother was not quite what she should have been? Would you if her mother had been a social outcast—a—"

"It would make no difference to me. She is good," Morris replied as the other seemed to hesitate at more ugly words.

"Would you marry her if you knew she herself had been born out of wedlock?" urged Van Cleef.

It was a startling query. Morris hesitated an instant, then smiled as he thought how little any knowledge could affect his marriage.

"Yes, I should," he answered.

"Then I guess you're worthy of her. I wasn't," Van Cleef said, and moved impulsively toward Morris, a trembling hand extended. "These things are not true. A man—a damnable blackmailing scoundrel —will tell you they are some of them true —never mind which. He'll bring more proofs than Brink can show to the contrary.

"He came to me—told me. And I believed him. And my narrow, little, society-rotted mind was shocked, was afraid of the possibilities of wider knowledge of the unfortunate secret, of its effect on my social standing. And I gave her up!

"Then for four months I've been trying to forget by wallowing in muddy, vermin-filled trenches, shooting down decenter men of one country for the sake of another, fighting their dirty war for men mad with distorted patriotisms over countries each as bad as the other. Thank God, a bullet stopped me before I murdered any better man than myself, so far as I know at least. It's murder for any man from this country to go over there and fight as I fought, unless he's as blind a fool about one side or the other as the men who belong there.

"But what I did there is on my soul. I read of your engagement a few weeks ago. I'd been in a hospital for six weeks before that. A man sees a lot of things in dirty trenches; and a lot more in a houseful of mangled men. He sees things a little bigger than the cheap opinions and conventions of a lot of dancing idlers. He—

"But I didn't come to confession. I had to come and make sure that she was not going to marry some other pin-headed fool like myself, but was going to get a man. I know now—I congratulate you on your immeasurable good fortune—I congratulate you on being worthy of it."

He half turned away. Up to then Morris had been so surprised and amazed at the man's questions and disjointed statements as hardly to notice the man himself. Now he thought with a fresh shock that Van Cleef looked quite desperate enough for suicide.

"Say, old man," he cried, without the least idea as to what he really would say.

Van Cleef wheeled sharply.

"For God's sake, man," he cried, "don't sympathize with me. I couldn't quite stand that, you know. And I don't deserve it. Goodby."

"But, look here," Morris cried after him once more. And again Van Cleef looked back, his hand on the knob of the door.

He seemed to read Morris's mind then. He smiled wanly.

"Oh, no," he said crisply; "I'm not going to mess things up by shooting a hole in my head to show people how little there was in it. That's the one thing I'm not quite ass enough for. I'm going to chase right back to the blooming war, since it seems to worry you. Only, I'm not going to use a gun any more. I've a berth waiting me, as an orderly in a hospital.

"Unless I'm badly mistaken, the good ship Rochambeau is at anchor off the Hook right now. I've a fast motor-boat ready at the East Twenty-fourth street float. I'm off."

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE WRECKAGE.

HE was gone. For an instant Morris stared at the doorway, as if the man had vanished into the air instead of through it. Then he sat down heavily.

It seemed to him that the occurrences of the past hour and a quarter were bearing down upon him like a weight too heavy for his shoulders.

His listless indifference had prevented him from taking much of the exercise by which most of the rich idlers keep themselves from succumbing to their luxury. He had put on flesh rather too rapidly. For a while he felt faint.

The misery depicted in poor Van Cleef's face depressed him. He understood, or thought he understood the man. He had

learned a little of the history which had lain behind the breaking of Florence's last engagement.

Van Cleef was one of the scions of vast wealth and aristocracy who had never let himself go, never run amuck. His mother, with no daughters to engineer into society, a woman of such dominating ambition as is essential to gain and maintain the leadership she held, had dominated the only son.

And young Van Cleef had no doubt delighted her heart by the social standing he had gained. He had seen rather too much of the pink-tea side of life. Fine, clean, straight he had been; but she had held him too close-leashed for the growth of the manly ruggedness of which he now showed himself to be capable.

But now, the big qualities in him awakened, eyes opened to see the great verities of life above life's petty conventions. Loving the girl so well he could arise from a hospital bed to cross the seas to make sure of her happiness and then go back to the reek of scavengering mangled bodies in order to forget the love he had lost.

For a time Morris forgot his own wretchedness in seeing the pity of the other case. The worst of it was that he wished Van Cleef had the girl he was to marry, that he no longer doubted Van Cleef held her heart, and that nothing could be done about it.

It was the bitter truth that fate had fixed things so that absolutely nothing could be done.

Florence, who was a strict enough Episcopalian to attend church regularly Sunday morning, held the more liberal views now prevalent about the remainder of the day. She had gone off early in the afternoon on the big motor-tender of her father's yacht, to visit Ulmer Park Basin, where Morris's was being overhauled and to inspect some slight alterations being made in its interior in preparation for the honeymoon they were to spend in a cruise through the Panama Canal and up the California coast.

She had expressed the intention of dropping in upon some St. Louis friends who had just anchored in Gravesend Bay with a houseboat, the name of which she had forgotten to mention. No doubt she would dine with them. Quite certainly she was now on her way back, whether by land or by water could make no earthly difference in the possibilities of reaching her with any message.

And nothing could have held Van Cleef to wait for her. He was so abjectly penitent and ashamed over the part he had played that he would have considered it an insult to intrude upon her the presence of the utter cad he counted himself.

Nor could Ballard do anything to lighten the load for Helen. A false move on his part now meant even greater danger than that of dragging her name into a court, linked with his own as that of a murderer. Brink's madness would not stop at her life.

But Brink had said he could telephone. A glance at the clock showed him there had been about time enough for her to reach her home by the train she had obviously been on her way to take. He started for the telephone instrument hanging on the wall of his room.

But he might not use that phone. Should he be unable to convince her now, as his letter had been unable to convince her before, that she must not try further to find him, she might trace the telephone call to the hotel. He went out again, hailed a taxicab, had himself driven a mile before he went into a little drug-store and the telephone booth inside.

It was her mother's voice that answered his call. And its weariness told him of one more who had suffered at the hand of fate.

No, her daughter had not yet returned from New York, was expected by the next train. Any message?

Morris said he would call again a little later. He rang off before he could be asked for his name.

He had himself driven to the Twenty-third Street ferry-house, where he got a time-table and found out that, since she must have missed the train connecting with the boat on which he and Brink had arrived at Barclay Street, the next would have got her home before he had called at a quarter after twelve.

He spent ten minutes of anguished alarm over this. She had had half an hour in New York to make that second train. What had she done? What could have happened to her? The ten minutes was abundant time for her arrival by a third train which reached East Orange but fifteen minutes after the second.

With trembling hand he took the receiver from the hook in the ferry-station's telephone booth.

"Yes?" answered the voice of her father this time, a voice so testy with obvious im-

patience at being called, that Morris began apologetically.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, Mr. Rainsford, but—"

"Never mind that," snapped the voice. "What do you want?"

Morris was astonished. Mr. Rainsford was a man of the extreme diffidence which Helen had inherited to the degree of an affliction. His mildness of manner had kept him far below the position his abilities might have warranted. His impatience was amounting to rudeness, and rudeness over a telephone is doubly rude.

"Is Miss Helen in?" Morris asked, when he had recovered breath from his surprise.

"Yes, but she isn't able to come to the telephone," Rainsford replied in the same abrupt manner. "Any message?"

But Morris knew now that she would come at his call if her feet would carry her. And he hoped that he might say something to relieve a little of her distress, enough to be worth the effort she might make to hear it.

"Mr. Rainsford, this is Morris—Morris Ballard," he said.

"Who? Who?" A new quality had come into the voice. Morris did not quite catch the significance of its note.

"Morris Ballard," he repeated a little more slowly.

Had a volcano suddenly sprung up beneath his feet and opened lively eruption by blowing him out of the booth, Morris could not have been more amazed by the result of his words.

"Morris Ballard!" the father fairly shrieked back at him. *"You—you—you—you—"* The choking, inexpressible contempt in the repeated pronoun was so terrific that the final burst of profanity which followed seemed mild. "You infernal selfish human whelp of hell's meanest cur—YOU!

"You want to know that my daughter has just been brought in here, helpless, hopelessly wrecked in mind and body, worse than dying, worse than dead—on account of *you*—do you? Well—know it—and know this too:

"For you, Morris Ballard, I'm going to buy the quickest, surest-shooting gun that money will purchase. And, as sure as there's justice in heaven, I'm going to carry it until I find you and shoot you down like the dog you've proven yourself. Have you got that—*you?* Good-by!"

The telephone company paid the cent revenue tax on that call. Morris reeled from the booth. He was not angry. His heart went out in sympathy to the man whose affection was rapidly making of him another madman parent of a loved daughter.

And there was nothing—nothing he might do.

Fate! Fate! All this the blind goddess or fiend had hung upon the tiny chance that Morris had entered a house to ask for a match! That much he knew.

Why he had been attacked, why his chance blow in the dark had been turned upon him to bring him to where he stood with his own life wrecked and surrounded with seemingly more pitiable wrecks on every side, he never expected to know.

But, had he not entered that house for a match, the thing could not have happened. It was fate.

Long after daybreak, his head reeling and throbbing, his whole body racked with weariness of brain and nerve, utterly exhausted, Morris ended a night's pacing of the floor in his rooms by toppling onto his bed. Only then did he note the frantic pain in his temples.

Not for the pain, but for hope that relief from it might clear his brain to think as he had not succeeded in thinking through all his pacing—Morris dragged himself to his cellarette.

Lately he had suffered, like most of the sort he had become, from indigestion and resultant headaches. He had supplied himself with a bottle of bromidic powders. Reckless now as to whether they were poisonous or otherwise, he poured into a tumbler a treble dose.

Hardly had he swallowed it, and started to replace the bottle, when the sight of other bottles there brought the reflection that it was stimulant he needed for thinking, rather than bromids.

Hypochondria was too new a thing to him for the acquisition of any amateurish rudimentary knowledge of medicine's properties. He poured himself what he thought would be whisky enough to counteract the bromid and brace his flagging faculties as well.

But whisky does not counteract the effect of bromids. The combination is hardly less effectual than knock-out drops. Scarcely had Morris dragged himself back to the bed and the only position in which

he even hoped to think any longer, when he was sleeping the sleep of the drugged.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW AGAIN.

A MONTCLAIR family of motorists hurrying straight across the Williamsburg Bridge and Manhattan for home were just in time to see Helen Rainsford's fall as she had started blindly after Morris's machine.

The head of the family, driving himself, stopped the car to go to the girl's assistance. Helen had come to sufficiently to plead to be taken home a moment before an ambulance clanged up to carry her to a hospital. The kindly people made room for her in their automobile after the doctor had administered stimulants.

At home the attempt to tell of her fleeting glimpse of the man she had sought so long was sufficient to throw her into hysteria. This was about the one symptom of nervous disorder she had not shown before, and alarmed her father more than her mother.

In her distraught condition she heard her father's statement that he was going to telephone for the doctor, she heard the telephone bell ring before he could have reached it in the hall below, she heard him shouting in a voice she had never heard from him before.

Though unable to control the sobs that were racking her very soul, she pitied him. She knew of his love a little better than she had ever known it.

As nearly as she could guess, he was a long while telephoning. She heard him shouting for "central," when she supposed he must be through. Then he was speaking a little more quietly. Then there was a ring again—and more shouting.

The doctor came shortly, and put her to sleep with opiates. It was the last she knew until the afternoon of the following day.

A profound calm remained upon her, as the result of the narcotic, after she awoke. Thoughts that might have driven to madness last night she could weigh this morning with deliberation. They grieved; but the grief was softened, numbed.

One thing seemed to stand out pre-eminently above all others. She was through. She had finished her search. Perhaps the drug was responsible for that conclusion.

And Morris was no wretched mental wreck, needing loving care and the medical treatments she had planned to work her nails off to obtain for him had she been able to find him. His entire appearance was that of an affluence that might almost corroborate the seemingly fanciful tale his letter had told.

That letter she had destroyed as a too pitiful evidence of dementia, after she had found that it held no available clue of his whereabouts. But its every word had burned itself into her mind. She could call it up before her, page for page.

It was true. The man she had seen last night was a man of affairs, a man who had grown used to some degree of command over others, a man who would be capable of handling large business matters.

Also he was obviously accustomed to a degree of luxury. The car he drove was of the most expensive in the country. Even if it belonged to the other man, Morris handled it with the ease of long custom. And he was no hired chauffeur. No man who owned such a car would have a chauffeur with the most dignified cut of beard and fashion's latest pattern of coat.

It was true. No doubt it was best.

He loved her still. That fleeting glimpse of her face had brought to his eyes the old look. So much she had seen. Her name had sprung to his lips as a cry of desire.

And then had come the look of fear. And that, too, was in accord with his letter. The man who had adopted him had insisted on a complete break with the past. And Morris feared to offend or violate the wishes of one who had set him in high places.

Nor could she blame him for not acting above the fear. It was her own fault that he believed she did not love him. Why should he jeopardize a fortune by recognizing her for whom his love had always seemed hopeless?

There was nothing more to do for Morris but to forget him. She smiled at the thought of doing that—smiled with the thought that, at least, her disappointed love could now become a sweet memory instead of the fearful, driving fear for him it had been.

No doubt Morris would forget. It would be better that he should. She herself would have preferred squalid poverty with him to such wealth without him as he seemed to possess. But a man has a life outside love.

And she loved him too well to dream of wishing him to sacrifice himself for her.

Her mother came softly into the room. It was with a pang of penitence that the girl noted the signs of age which had come in the dear face during a few months. She accused herself of utter selfishness in having forgotten her parents in her sole anxiety for her lost lover.

"Are you awake, dear?" Mrs. Rainsford asked tremulously. "Can't you sleep a little more?"

"No, mother, I've slept enough. I want to talk to you a little," the girl said weakly, but with a calm her mother remarked instantly.

"Don't try to talk, Helen," admonished the older woman tenderly.

"I must. I must tell you—about Morris. He told the truth in that letter. Everything about him as I saw him last night had the look of a very rich man. He even looked as if he had been rich long enough to be growing a bit bored with it.

"And so, I'm not going to worry about him any more. He's better off than he could be with me. I'm glad he thinks I don't love him. He's just foolish enough to throw up all he has for me, if he knew.

"So now I'm going to get well as fast as I can; and go back to work and help get us all on our feet again. I'm going to be sensible. There's nothing else."

It was here that her mother broke in. Those last words had held for her keen intuition the first false note.

Helen had not quite accomplished her own conversion, could not quite calmly make up her mind that there was nothing else. And, until she did, there was the danger that the girl would think of something else as remotely possible.

No parent could have been sufficiently interested in a man to see with equanimity the total sacrifice of a daughter's strength for him, no matter how deserving the man might seem of the oblation. The father had long since come forth in open rebellion against it. Mrs. Rainsford had held down her protests only because she knew their futility and that they but added to the damage being done.

"I think you're quite right, darling," she now said eagerly, hastening to banish the last spark of restlessness which might bring back the whole fever of the past months. And, keenly alive to the value of a new interest, she hurriedly added:

"It's been very hard on your father and me to see you spend yourself as you have. Still, we've both tried to bear it, so long as it seemed you might do something by your efforts. Now you know you can't do any more. And—your father and I need you. I don't mean for any work or money you can earn. But you're all we have, you know—and—"

She could not keep back a sob. She was but little less of a nervous wreck than her daughter.

"Oh, I'm sorry I did it. I ought to have thought more of you. But—mother—I couldn't do less than I did—for the man who had loved me all these years. Could I, mother?"

The thought was bringing back the look of wild distress to the wan features. Mrs. Rainsford hastened to calm herself.

"No, dear," she answered soothingly. "We don't blame you, dear. I'm a little proud to think you'd love so well and so true."

She was wise enough to refrain from mentioning her hope that a year or two might bring another object for as firm a love.

"I don't know what more I could have done," the girl added in a tone that pleaded for fresh confirmation of her words. "I don't know what more I can do now, anyhow," she still spoke further.

"I don't know what more you can do but to drive your father to the mad-house and me to the grave," the mother said firmly. "Last night, when that man called up—"

"What man called up, mother?" Helen asked with renewed and increased tensing of her voice.

The opium's calm was passing away. Mrs. Rainsford deemed it best to go on, to press the matter to a conclusion. Firmness is often the best antidote for hysteria.

"I don't know who he is—Morris's benefactor. He said that he and Morris would have you arrested if you didn't quit following Morris about and annoying him. And poor father went fairly frantic. I never heard him use such language. He was nearly crazy over you at the time, and was just going to call for the doctor—he thought you were clear out of your head—and then to get that message!

"And right afterward Morris himself called up. Your father didn't wait for him to add anything to what the other had said. He told Morris he'd buy a revolver and hunt him down and kill him. Of course he

won't do that. He was so frightened about you that he was desperate enough then for anything.

"But really, it can't go on, Helen. Morris, perhaps, has the right to feel that you have no claim on him. At all events he's exercising the right. He's to be married to his benefactor's daughter this week. He regards all you're doing as only annoyance. It seems that they've managed somehow to know a great deal about it all the while."

It was terrible mental surgery. Before she was half finished Mrs. Rainsford wished she had not begun.

Helen sat up in the bed, her eyes wildly staring into her mother's, her look that of a fawn receiving the last stab. At the final statement, the statement that her long search had been known to its object, she fell back; and the mother thought for a shocked second that her attempted cure had killed. But Helen raised herself again.

"No—no—no—no—" She whispered the word with the regularity of a heart-throb, albeit a heart stricken unto death.

To the startled older woman, who saw her blunder too late, the fire in the girl's eyes might mean insanity, it might mean the last flash of the life spark.

Had Helen's drawn face been less terribly tense, Mrs. Rainsford would have dashed down-stairs to the telephone to summon aid. But the awful crisis depicted on her daughter's face was too violent to leave for an instant.

"Give her one of these tablets if she becomes restless," the doctor had said, when his morning visit had found the girl still sleeping. The little box was labeled "Morphin, 1-8 gr."

"Here, dear, take one of these," the mother bade, her shaking fingers vainly striving to pick out one of the tablets without gathering a half dozen.

"Give me all of them—all of them," Helen cried frantically.

But Mrs. Rainsford had got the one tablet now, and she placed it upon the girl's tongue. Then she took the precaution to put the box into the pocket of the house-dress she was wearing. She sat down and waited for the opiate to begin its quieting work.

Even before the narcotic could take any effect, Helen became quiet. The spasm of emotion had exhausted her. The morphin was insufficient to induce sleep, but it restored something of mental balance, halted the wild inward turmoil which verged on at least temporary madness. By and by she closed her eyes, not to sleep, but to think more calmly.

For she could not, would not believe what her mother had told her. It was one thing to give Morris up, knowing that it was better he should never have become aware of her true feelings toward him; but to have her idol shattered, to think that he had known of all her effort and torment of mind —this was more than she could endure.

She forced the calm upon herself. She must think—find out why and how he could be guilty of such cruelty. And she could think only by holding in check the wilder blasts of her emotion.

And so she lay still, until her mother believed her asleep, gathered up most of the bottles in the room, went to the medicine chest in the adjoining bath-room and gathered all other vials that contained even possible poisons, came back and assured herself that the girl was still sleeping. Then she went down-stairs to put the dangerous drugs in a place so unsual as to preclude all likelihood of Helen's finding them.

Morris had telephoned after the other man had done so. This at least left room for the belief that he did not know of the other man's message. Her father had refused to talk to Morris. What proof was there then that Morris's message might not have been very different from the older man's, had her father but listened to it?

It was a way out. Her heart clung to the theory as a fanatic will cling to the shreds of a rag of doctrine that has been riddled with proofs of its utter falseness.

Morris was not acting of his own volition.

He was being forced into a marriage against his will.

As to the nature of the marriage, Helen's mind was free to invent as ill a mating as she chose. Of course, she had never seen the rarely beautiful girl in whose face she could have found no guile had she beheld it.

Over the details of all she had seen and learned her mind searched again and again. Every scrap that could be turned to the corroboration of her tenuous theory was brought out of her memory, which was now preternaturally clear under the influence of the drug she had taken.

The look on Morris's face last night *had* been fear. It was fear not merely for himself, but for her, that had sealed his lips before he had uttered a word of recognition.

Again picking up a thread from her previous reasoning, she assured herself that it could have been only a deeper fear than that of losing his chances of fortune. For the other man distrusted the potency of his fortune to hold him; else why, again, the threat directed against herself?

Morris was true—true to her. The thought of it braced her nerves like a strong wine. Until a few hours ago she had never doubted that he was true in so far as she had permitted him to be.

But the doubt, raised for a few moments to a heart-breaking certainty, had been put aside again. That she had quenched that doubt only by the flimsiest of logical structures, only by building positive assurances on mere negative assumptions, troubled her not in the least, nor detracted from a relief that amounted to actual joy.

But the joy was short-lived. It was something—it was a vast deal—to have her faith restored in her idol.

But Morris was being driven to a marriage against his will. The marriage was to take place within a week. Already the sun was setting over Orange Mountain to close the second day of that week. And she—

Could she summon strength to make a last effort?

Helen concluded that the only hope for her was sleep. A night of it—and perhaps she would have strength to do something—to get some one to move toward the prevention of the impending marriage. She set herself to the task of wooing slumber.

She did not stir as she heard her mother's silent step in the room and its immediate retreat. Mrs. Rainsford only wished to ascertain that she was quiet. But her strained, overstrung nerves were irritated even by the slight sound of the closing of the front door.

A moment later they drew tense and taut as the telephone sent its sharp jingle through the house. In her overwrought condition the sound could be nothing but the call for some message from her lover.

This time her father was not here to cut it off. Her mother would be patient.

The ring was repeated. It jarred on her listening ears like the filing of a saw. Why did her mother keep him waiting? Why—

Again—and suddenly Helen realized that the sound of the closing of the door had meant her mother's momentary leaving of the house. Helen raised herself, sank bank again weak and giddy; made a stronger effort.

On the chair beside her pillow stood one bottle still—the bottle of aromatic spirits of ammonia. In the dimming light she recognized its size and shape.

She controlled her trembling fingers to draw the cork, inhaled enough of the fumes to stop the reeling of her head. Then she tipped the bottle to her lips, let a few drops burn into her mouth, swallowed them.

Strength came to stand—to walk while she clung to the bed-post, the door's frame, the wall, the banister. At the head of the stairs darkness gathered and reeled before her eyes.

She inhaled a deep breath, clung to the rail, tottered down a step—another—an-another—

Almost to the bottom she fell. It was a moment before she could even attempt to rise. And the telephone bell had ceased to ring. Once more the gathering blackness that was blacker than the dark in the house, the reeling weakness—then the bell gave another sharp appeal.

Somehow she reached it, got the receiver down and to her ear, whispered, got enough voice to speak a little louder.

"Is that you, Miss Rainsford?" asked a man's voice.

She did not recognize it. In her disappointment she was on the point of dropping to the floor to wait her mother's return and assistance.

"This is Herman Adams—down by the river, you know," the voice went on hurriedly. "And say, that fast motor-boat come up the river again about ten minutes ago. And it's lyin' off behind the old house. And there was a light lit in the window just now. Could you come down quick? Mebbe there's something doing."

Could she? Could she? It seemed to take her last ounce of strength to speak audibly into the instrument some directions that flashed into her reeling brain.

"Get all the men—you can—Mr. Adams—police, too—if you can find any. Watch the house until—until—"

"Until you get here, yes'm. All right—you get a taxi and come like the—as fast as you can. Mebbe there'll be something doing." Herman Adams was very much excited over the rare mystery. He shut off without another word.

Helen clung, swaying, to the little coil-box on the wall. Could she go?

Then the tremendous will which had held her up when all other strength had

failed, came to her once more. By sheer force of it she drove the whirling haze from her brain, whipped into her muscles the strength to move.

She never quite knew how she got into clothes, how she half ran, half fell once more down the stairs and out into the street.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### HERMAN COMMITS MURDER.

HELEN had swallowed a teaspoonful more of the fiery ammonia, and now in the cool of the evening air it helped to revive her sufficiently for the walk around the corner and down the block to the trolley-cars.

Planning as she went, she got off at Grove Street, with intent to find a cab at the station a block away. One hove into view, hastening after a chance passenger, even as she steadied herself to step to the curb. It had to halt to avoid running her down.

She managed to voice a plea to the chauffeur to get over the Clay Street bridge without any more regard for speed laws than necessary, and to turn up the first avenue. Then she sat back and sucked into her pounding lungs more of the life-giving breeze that fanned through the open window as the taxi bounded over uneven pavements and trolley-tracks.

Obviously the driver of the cab thought that a woman so barely able to stand on her feet would not be abroad without some well defined purpose, and was resolved to do his part in her behalf. She felt a tinge of shame at thought of the meager fare which was all she had to pay him for his pains.

The bridge—the factories again—then the open but ill-kept road. Suddenly she saw ahead a group of men. She bade the chauffeur halt. Herman Adams stepped quickly to the door of the cab.

"Come on, Miss," he urged, too excited to notice how weak she was. "We ain't got no time to lose. These officers here is for makin' a straight raid on the beggars. But I think—and Billy thinks—we'd ought to do it different—just as much like it happened to your friend as we could.

"Now, I says you'd ought to let us get up ahead and hide ourselves around the house, so's nobody can't get out and away from us, and you come on in the car. Mebbe them tramps has the idea that it's rich guys with autos that they can get the most out of. And then one of us, like he had just come from the automob*eel*—he goes up to the door and knocks.

"Then the rest of yez can wait long enough to see what happens to me. It seems they didn't kill this lady's friend, and they won't kill me, see? I think that's the real scheme. Mebbe we'll find out something that way."

His last words were addressed to the crowd. Helen seconded his plan. Her obvious weakness helped to give a little more force to her pleading that they follow it out.

"Put out your lights there, Mr. Chauffeur," Herman advised. "It was a dark taxi what come before. Mebbe that had something to do with it. And her friend's car was dark, too, for it was looking for matches he went into the house."

The men went on ahead and vanished quickly into the gloom. For five minutes Helen fought with the frantic desire to shriek with the terror of the dark road. She felt that only the knowledge of the chauffeur's presence on the seat in front of her kept her from madness.

All the horror of the other dark hour she had spent but a few yards beyond came over her with a force she no longer had strength to bear.

"I reckon they'll be ready now," the chauffeur said in a thick whisper. "What do we do?"

"Just drive up with barely noise enough to be heard inside the place," she advised.

A moment later she was halted exactly where she had sat and waited four months and a half ago, when another darkened taxicab had sent into her heart the first chill of the ghastly fright that seemed to have clung to her ever since.

She peered out into the darkness. She barely suppressed a scream when a face appeared at the door.

"I'm goin' myself, Miss Rainsford," Adam's voice whispered to her. "The others is all around the place, ready when I let out a yell for them. You just sit still."

He vanished through the tumble-down gate. It occurred to Helen that he was about of Morris's height.

She sat but a moment. Somewhere, far back down the road over which they had

come, sounded the horn of an approaching car. She got out and had walked half way toward the house, with a view to finding one of the hidden watchers and sustaining her strength by the knowledge of his presence—when the door was opened in response to Herman Adams's knock.

She halted, eyes and ears straining toward the interior of the hall, but dimly lit by the light that shone from the room to the right of the entrance. She caught sight of but a shoulder and arm of the man who had opened the door. She heard the voice calmly bid the visitor enter:

"Come in. Step right inside."

The speaker was not the big, gray-haired man who had once opened the same door to her. He was not so tall, and he had a different voice.

And then things began to happen peculiarly. Herman Adams did not shut the door behind him; the other had seemed to lead the way. But Helen distinctly heard the click of the lock and the rattle of a bolt at the same instant as the light went out.

And the light was not carried out as she had thought before. She wondered that she could have thought so. It happened instantaneously, as if a lamp were blown out.

Somehow it did not occur to her to doubt that she was witnessing a reproduction of the scene which had taken Morris Ballard out of her life and into the blackness of that other evening last May. Only, now it was all sinister, dreadful.

The silence of the next moment was all but perfect. The walls of the old house were doubly lined with brick; and she now saw that wooden shutters covered all but a quarter of the window, through which the light had shone.

Faintly there came the tinkle of falling glass. Even that sound startled. The next instant the harsh note of the approaching motor's horn seemed to be the last straw.

Helen could check the impulse to shriek only by dropping to the grass and clinging to it with all the strength she had. Even that failed her the next second, when, not ten feet away, one of the men whispered to another:

"Come on—something's happening all right. They might—"

"No—they didn't kill the other fellow. They can't get past Jim and the cop at the back—and—"

"Come on," the first said more insistently.

She heard them padding swiftly across the damp grass. But before they had time to cover the short distance to the house, the light appeared in the window again.

But this time it was not the light of the lamp. It was a flickering, shifting ray, at first, that of an electric torch she decided. And she noted that this was an alteration of the orignal programme. The falling glass had been their lamp, knocked down in the moment of darkness.

Those within were not the only ones availing themselves of the weird little light. She saw the faintly limned top of one of the watchers' heads, as he peeped cautiously into the uncovered quarter of the window.

And then her straining ears caught the horrified exclamation of the observer:

"My God! They've killed him! No—it ain't Herman. They've got Herman—Herman's being held by— Come on!"

And at this instant the burr of a motor hummed into the air; there was the sharp squawk of a little horn such as most taxicabs affect. Later she knew that the driver of her own taxicab had blown the warning to the other car which was approaching without lights.

Then the sound broke her restraint. Her strained nerves lost their grip. She gave a wild scream of terror.

Her shriek took the place for half the waiting men of the signaling cry Herman had promised. And the result was that a fairly well organized plan of attack turned into a disordered fight in the darkness, men leaping at others of their own number, dark figures streaking off into the night, others streaking after them, hopeless, black confusion, crashing windows, futile shots from the policemen's revolvers, flickers of their torches and others, shouts, bellows, oaths. And the girl sat and rocked herself in an agony of sheer terror that had no meaning, no intelligence, scarcely human instinct.

Out of the blackness a figure shot toward her. It dodged the low-lying object she must have appeared to it, and hurtled by. To her straining eyes it looked as if the man ran with his hands behind him.

A yard or two beyond her he stumbled, fell, lay struggling on the ground. An oath, with more fear in it even than anger, came from the man's lips.

The half thought that the voice was Herman Adams's brought her a slight return of

sanity. She was on the point of struggling to her feet to go to his assistance, when another man broke through the bushes from almost the same spot as had disgorged the first. Before she could cry out or move he ran squarely upon her, toppled, fell in a heap.

A wild curse rang from the lips of the second man. Some instinct told her it was the voice of the fellow who had just admitted Herman at the door. She had gone down with him, but sufficiently aside to get up to her knees quickly.

Now she hurled herself blindly at him, held him as best she could. A single second the figure struggled to throw her off. She flung her arms about its waist, her whole, unthinking, uncontrollable impulse to hold on until help came or death.

And the form she had seized sank down upon the ground. A weird grunt, as if the air escaped involuntarily from lungs that had become inanimate bellows, sent a sickening thrill to her senses. The thing she held seemed strangely, terribly limp.

With a horror unthinkable she caught at the black outline of a sleeve, lifted it. It was but a dead weight—dead—and the thing she had caught was a corpse!

And once more she lost herself. She pierced the black air with shriek on shriek of hysterical, mad, uncontrollable fright.

And out of the dark loomed one figure more. It was bigger, more terrible than either of the others.

This fugitive, unheeding the danger of being heard, was growling, grunting, panting such oaths as in themselves would have sufficed to curdle her blood with sheer shock had there been room in brain for another flicker of terror beyond what she had already felt.

The oaths halted suddenly, as if the man had just heard the woman's outcries. Then, with a fiercer shout of rage that was hoarse with mad fury, he bent down to her:

"You — — — you! You did this! And by the eternal God I'll kill you for it, if it's the last thing—"

With a quick pull on her shoulder he jerked her up before him. She felt rather than saw that he swung his free arm back to gather impetus for a blow that should crush her. Then it came—

She had ducked enough to miss the full force of it, and the tremendous fist glanced on the top of her head a little above and behind the temple. With a ghastly oath the monstrous creature drew back for another better-aimed attempt.

Never in all her life before had man laid a forceful hand upon Helen Rainsford. Her father had left corporal punishment to her mother. It had hardly seemed possible that a man could strike a woman. That any should ever strike her had been simply unthinkable.

And now—the blow probably saved her reason. She felt herself stiffening in every fiber of her being. The wildness of fear, the uncontrollable trembling, the impulse she could not check to shriek and shriek at the top of her voice, the giddy weakness—all went out to give place to a cold fury which seemed to her to endue her with the strength of a giant.

And, even in that moment of primal instinct, she was not unconscious that this was the man who had taken her lover from her, was holding him even now. She could never have dreamed of possessing the utter fire of hate his brutal act aroused in her.

She rejoiced in the feelings of a cave woman, of some sheer wild thing that was more a beast of prey than that. She got an arm free, a hand, and raised it with the quickness of a great cat, nails downward, to the cheek of the brute who had turned her fear into fury.

The tearing flesh under the claws her nails had become brought no sickening reaction. The feel of warm blood on her knuckles brought a fierce, mad joy. She reached up to claw again.

But her moment's strength was only that which could fill the frail body she had left. It was no match for the power of the man who had caught her, who now seized her wrist, crossed it to the grip of his left hand, and made to strike again.

This time, however, his attempt was interrupted by a quick flash of light from the pocket torch of one of the policemen. The officer swung his club downward.

And they dragged her away from the fallen man, lusting still for his blood. She was deaf to their words. Only their strong hands held her back.

"The brute—he struck me—struck me—struck me—" she hissed through clenched teeth.

Only a frightened cry from behind her brought her back to reason. It was Herman's voice.

"Let me go! Let me go! I didn't go to kill him—so help me God! I didn't fellows.

He grabbed me—and I just struck out—it was in the dark—and he fell. My God! fellows—let me go."

And then her spent fury ended in a shudder of horror, as another of the men who seemed now to be gathering from all about the yard turned a flash on the limp body.

She shuddered again as the fellow prodded the prone figure with his foot, then reached down and shook it unceremoniously. As calmly he flung the corpse over on its back and pointed the light into the still, staring face.

"Humph," he grunted indifferently, "he's dead all right. Wonder what got him."

A moment before Herman's voice, which ten minutes earlier had been strong and steady and manly as he boldly left Helen to enter the mystery-haunted house, had become a poor whimper of craven fear. Now it rose in a shriek of terror.

"It's him! It's him! I didn't go to do it! But—but—oh, God! How did he get here? I killed him—inside."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### MORRIS IN THE DARK.

IT was by no means the first time that Horton had worked for a master who went to bed at daylight and with his boots on. Wherefore, when he arrived at a quarter of nine, which was about as early as Morris ever arose now, and saw his employer stretched on the bed and snoring profoundly, he tiptoed discreetly to the pantry, got coffee to the proper temperature for his own taste, drank it, picked up the last novel he had borrowed from the library, and waited comfortably.

Experience had now taught him what visitors were apt to be of importance and what could well be put off. As amongst the latter he classified the postman with the last of the month's statements and a few crested notes with stiff cards inside them, also two young acquaintances who assured him that they had called only to beguile his boss into a game of pool.

A telephone message from the telegraph company to the effect that Miss Brink would be excused from motoring this afternoon, since she had decided to spend a day with houseboating friends on Gravesend Bay—caused little hesitation. It too could be attended to any time.

But, when darkness gathered, dinner was served, the night with its usual round of pleasures beginning, Horton grew a little uneasy. Finally, a little before nine o'clock, he tiptoed for the sixteenth time in two hours to his master's door, looked in, and for the first time emitted a discreet cough—discreet coughs being the only kind butlers ever use.

Five or six more coughs, their discreetness diminishing and their volume slightly increasing at each utterance, failed to have any effect upon the sleeper. Horton decided to speak his master's name.

The chances of the humor in which Mr. Morris might awaken to catch him in the act of shaking him were more than Horton cared to risk. His master was sleeping too loudly to seem in any serious danger.

Yet it seemed risky to allow him to sleep through the evening. Morris's evenings were usually things he took seriously.

Horton decided to go below and confer with some of the house servants as to the best means or excuse for waking the sleeper. So much the best scheme seemed likely to be a faked up telephone call that the man switched on the bed-room buzzer, which he had turned off on his arrival in the morning. Horton lacked only the ingenuity to devise a really good fake call.

As a matter of fact he had more than half awakened Morris before he went out. The click of a latch in the next room caused Ballard to open his eyes, drowsily to note the darkness of things, to close them again in the hope of a final nap. But Horton's scheme was carried out for him by the hand of fate—or the voice of the hotel clerk.

The sound of the buzzer at his very ear startled Morris. Only the most important calls were ever turned into his room in that fashion. He awoke wide, to remembrances of the events of last night, to a thought that this call must connect with them.

"Yes—Mr. Morris on the wire," he spoke into the receiver. "Who is it?"

"The clerk, Mr. Morris. There's a gentleman here who insists on seeing you immediately. He refuses to give his name to me; says he will give it only to you. What shall I do about him?"

Morris paused an instant. Then, "Send him right up," he bade. Immediately he pressed the button to summon Horton, who was the only servant he kept constantly for himself, since he could rely upon the hotel to furnish as many more as he might need at any time.

Horton had got down stairs by the elevator just in time to catch the clerk's "All right, Mr. Morris," see the waiting guest, duck back into the elevator and up to the rooms ahead of the visitor.

He found his employer staring in consternation at the clock on the chiffonier, while ripping at the wilted collar around his neck without having troubled to unknot the tie.

"Beg pardon, sir, let me do it," Horton murmured, hurrying to the rescue before apoplexy should become violent.

Morris had found that his head ached prodigiously; he felt worse than he had felt after the gayest banquet he had as yet attended; and he was furious about the time.

"Look at it," he roared. "Look at it! Quarter after nine—at night. Great heavens! I had an appointment with Mr. Brink and his daughter at three. And there were a lot of papers to have signed at the office this morning. I—

"Go show that man into the den at the front of the library, so that I can talk without his hearing me. Tell him I'll be with him in a minute. No—wait a minute. Get Jenkins up here. I'd like an eye kept on the fellow. Jenkins will know how to watch him without being caught at it."

Horton, the perfect performer of all that was commanded, was in the next room, pressing a button on a switch-board, almost as Morris finished the order. Over the button was enameled: "House detective."

Jenkins appeared on the run, saw the waiting visitor at the apartment entrance, the bell-boy who had accompanied the man. He entered by a rear door from the same hall-way.

"I just want that man watched until I'm dressed, Jenkins," Morris ordered the detective. "No listening while I talk to him, if I cough. Get it? But stay within reach. He wouldn't give his name below."

"If he was a burglar, he'd give a name, sir, to avoid suspicion," Jenkins promptly deduced from the given premises. "But I'll watch him, sir, till you're ready."

"I'm only half awake yet," said Morris, as Horton left him to remove a shoe from a foot which twinged with incipient gout.

Jenkins hurriedly got to a position behind a heavy curtain in the library, whence he could keep an eye on the den, while Horton opened the door and admitted the stranger.

"He's just having his bath, sir," the servitor announced. "He'll be with you in a few moments, sir. A cigar, sir? Something to drink, sir?"

He returned to Morris and the task of getting a shave, hot water for a bath, ice water for a drink, and the evening clothes he had already laid out for just such an emergency—to the various needs of his master's person.

"Beg pardon, sir—if you'll pardon my saying so, sir—the—er—gentleman in there is—not a well-bred looking person, sir," he remarked as he handed over the drink.

But Morris hardly heeded the words. He was far less interested in any possible matter connected with the stranger in his library than in the difficulties he feared from his remissness in regard to his engagement with his future father-in-law and his bride-to-be.

That engagement had had no less important purpose than the securing of the marriage license. When he entered the library den his chief interest in the stranger lay in ridding himself of the man's presence as quickly as possible.

"Good evening," he began, with the intonation that made the words a polite form of inquiry as to the other's business.

The man was a puzzle. His clothes were of faultless quality, though a bit dusty, as if a motor-ride had preceded his arrival. His face was that of a very low-grade crook.

Eyes shifty, close-set, hidden under heavy brows that overhung them, nose flat and almost broad enough at the nostrils to suggest negro blood, thick lips stubbled with at least forty-eight hours' growth of black beard and stained with the tobacco of one of Morris's cigars which the fellow had not lit, but had chewed down to half its length while he waited—he was enough to lend some comfort to the reflection that the house detective was no farther away than the drawing-room.

"Mr. Morris?" queried the stranger.

Morris nodded curtly in response.

"You are, I understand, about to be married to Miss Florence Brink," said the visitor.

Morris resisted the impulse to tell the man it was no concern of his.. He had no time for a dispute. He nodded again.

"You may be interested in these little notes," went on the other, fishing from his pocket a large wallet and quickly extracting a small photograph of a newspaper clipping and a larger one of a written docu-

ment, both of which were considerably yellowed by age.

Morris made no move to take them. Already it had dawned upon him that he was dealing with the blackmailer of whom young Van Cleef had spoken last night.

"Not specially," he snapped.

"No?" the other half jeered. "Aha! I rather thought Dave Brink had bought you in. I couldn't see where else you had come from."

Morris remained silent, his eyes regarding the man with cold, calculated indifference. For, within his heart, he was anything but indifferent. He wanted to know the truth, even if it should but gratify his curiosity.

"Well, in that case, I don't suppose it makes much difference to you whether your wife was born in or out of wedlock." The shifty little eyes darted at Morris's face, away from it, back again. "You can't afford to be particular. Probably you wouldn't care if I published these things to-morrow. I could, you know. And I will, if—"

"If what?" urged Morris.

He spoke only because the other had stopped, and he wished to hide the interest he felt. He had learned of the cloud that overhung his fiancée. At that the only information he was gaining concerned the character of the man he had to deal with.

Otherwise this but eliminated the other dark possibility which Van Cleef had suggested to keep him from knowing the real one.

Swiftly, too, it was dawning upon him just how dark a cloud this might be. To himself it could mean little, nothing. To a man in love with the girl it could hardly affect his love.

But to a man with a social position to maintain—to a man who cared for society and society's opinion, a man brought up as Van Cleef had been or the others, so far as Morris knew—it was easy enough to comprehend why they should hesitate.

Yes, and reason why they should balk altogether. The cunning brute in front of him could bleed a man of a fortune, threatening the social ruin of his wife.

A man who loved her would pay and pay again to keep from her the humiliating knowledge. A man who loved her would have to pay to preserve domestic peace if she knew the awful thing, for no woman would permit the publication of it.

And what was he to do? Whence could he pay this leech? If Brink could not buy the villian off, how could he?

And what a fresh cause for hating Brink! He had attributed at least a mad and mistaken love of his daughter to the old multimillionaire. Now it appeared that his desire for the daughter's marriage was explained much more rationally.

Brink wanted some one else to pay!

"If what?" The man was studying Morris's face furtively, indecision on his own. Morris thought he was wondering how high a figure he dared name.

"I'll publish them if the breaking of your engagement ain't announced in the papers of Wednesday morning," the man said slowly. He got up, pushed the papers a little closer to Morris on the table where he had laid them.

"Keep 'em and read them at your leisure. I've plenty more," he added.

Morris gasped with amazement. Here was a cunning he had not guessed from the man's appearance. Here was the real secret of those broken engagements.

In a flash he could see the events that the next three days would bring forth, the bit of nasty scandal tucked into a corner of one unsavory paper, others of its ilk, though less openly, rushing to obtain the denials which would enable them to print the morsel and yet escape the charge of mongering mere defamation.

Denials refused, denials issued—would make no difference. And this on the eve of a proud woman's wedding!

No wonder the others had broken their engagements. They had done it to save Florence. He must do the same—

And yet Brink had him trapped as none of the others had been. And, in the long run, Brink ought to have paid the man, who obviously declined to be bought with less money than Brink could afford.

That Brink should have gone to such pains to provide for holding him, should forever keep up the threat of prosecution for murder, might indicate that the millionaire would take the chance of the unsavory publicity.

If Brink preferred that, it must be so. Morris was not the only one who would suffer by being prosecuted for murder. He had promised to stand by Florence to the extent of marrying her, come what might; he had not promised to back out of the marriage at the cost of having Helen's name

dragged into a murder trial, of having her life possibly endangered by Brink's fury.

He must see Brink; let Brink decide; abide by that decision.

He let the blackmailer depart in peace. There seemed nothing else to do.

"Get my car out quick," he shouted at Horton—"the runabout. Give me my coat. You can call up Colonel Brink and tell him I'm coming."

He made his way to the coat closet and took down the first garment that came to hand, while Horton shouted the order over the 'phone to the garage only a block away.

Was this to be freedom after all? Ballard asked himself, as his chauffeur sped the car up-town toward the vast mansion on the cliff above Fort Washington Park. And slowly he lost the hope.

Brink had been at too much pains to get him where he could not get out. Other men had loved Florence well enough, perhaps, to marry her, and loved her too well to marry her at such cost to herself. In Morris, Brink had got himself a man who could not evade marrying her for any cause.

Brink had wearied of paying. Perhaps he had despaired of ever paying enough. Perhaps he believed that the blackmailer would not dare to give up his secret and the revenue it brought.

In Ballard's case Brink would not be clear of the paying, for Ballard's wealth was all his. In the last ditch, a woman well married could stand the publication of an ill birth better than any unmarried woman could.

No—there could be no hope. The marriage would go on. Well, he would try to make it as easy for the proud girl as possible, if the blackmailer's threats were carried out.

"Colonel Brink has not got back yet. Miss Brink has gone to Kearney to meet him, sir," said Wane, whom Morris had come to know as Brink's personal servant.

"Kearney?" Morris repeated in surprise.

"Yes, sir. Colonel Brink wanted some one to come for him, sir. Miss Brink came in, sir, just as he called, and she took the telephone from me, sir, as I 'ad answered, sir. It's a bit unfortunate, sir, I'm afraid. I don't think the colonel would 'ave wished 'er to be going to such a place at this time of night. I think they 'ad a bit of a tiff about it; but she 'ad 'er way, sir, in the end."

"Did she go by boat or motor-car?"

"Oh, by car, sir," the servant responded in a tone that showed surprise at the suggested alternative. "Will you come in and wait for them, sir? I think you'd hardly catch them now, sir."

It was one of the marks of esteem which Brink exhibited toward Morris for the benefit of such as might mark it, that his future son-in-law was always received in his private apartments unless Miss Brink was included in the visit. Wane showed Ballard thither.

Kearney!—the place by the river—the end of all that had meant his own real life, the beginning of his life as another's slave; the end of love, the beginning of Brink's money-bought luxuries! Ballard hated the name of the place, hoped he might never see it again.

But why had Brink gone there now?

Once more Morris experienced a spasm of that hope which was ready to arise with the faintest excuse or with none at all. Only as the spasm passed did he realize that it involved the murder of another man.

He had thought that Brink might have gone to trap a fresh victim on whom to begin again the elaborate scheme to force a marriage with his daughter. The thought fitted into the fact that Brink must have known of the blackmailer's visit, since money would have silenced the man and must have been refused, under threat of just such a call.

But it fitted nothing else. He had always believed that his own arrival at the old house by the river had preceded that of some other expected visitor. But the murder had been quite accidental, impossible to provide for with any degree of certainty sufficient to warrant the plan.

A man who feared to go unarmed would hardly have walked in with the lack of caution which had enabled Morris to suffer the unexpected attack. And, certainly, a thousand men might have struggled unarmed with the assailant and failed to kill him.

No, Brink had taken advantage of a wholly unforeseen opportunity. There was no way to account for all the things that had happened, on any basis of a design such as had been worked upon Morris in the end. But Brink's presence in the old house last May and his presence there tonight had some purpose. The blackmailer!

And Morris knew instantly that he was on track of the secret. Last May's events had been succeeded the same night by the

breaking of Florence's engagement to Van Cleef. Probably his own appearance on the scene had put a stop to plans for the kidnaping or doing away with the man. And to-night, the man grown warier, had escaped again!

Hardly had he reached this conclusion when a partial corroboration came, but came in such form as to drive out every interest in it as such.

The buzzer of the telephone sounded. Morris, believing Wane had directed the switching of some message for himself, lifted the receiver.

"Is this Colonel Brink?" asked the voice. Morris thought the man said, "Is this Colonel Brink's," and answered, "Yes."

The next words made him a conscious deceiver: "This is Barnes, of the Skiffington Agency, the man on the young lady's party-wire, colonel."

The Skiffington Detective Agency was too well known for Morris to be ignorant of it.

"Yes?" he answered eagerly.

"I have been trying to get you for over an hour—two hours, in fact. I caught a message for the lady just about quarter after six. A fellow telephoned her that there was a motor-boat and a light at some house in Kearney, by the river, and she told him to get all the men he could and policemen and she'd be there.

"Since then there's been a lot to-do. You know, the lady's pretty sick—had the doctor last night and again this morning—you were on the wire yourself last night, and young Mr. Morris, too. And the old lady got back this evening, just after the young one had gone; and they have been telephoning all over the county.

"I ain't dared use my own line, for fear they'd get in on it, and so I've gone out every half-hour and tried to get you. Things has been quiet for an hour now; but they've left the receiver off the hook by mistake, I guess. The line's out of commission. They must have got everybody in the State lookin' for the girl by now."

Morris made no reply. Hurling the receiver back on the hook, he rushed from the room.

Helen—it had taken him some seconds to realize it was she of whom the detective spoke—Helen lured to the house by the river! Brink there!

Thank Heaven for Brink's despicable spying that had extended to putting a man on the same party line as that with which her father's telephone was connected. Thank Heaven for the blunder and the luck that had combined to give him the benefit of this last bit of Brink's recklessly expensive information.

Of the fear for the result of the journey, of the arrest and trial that Brink would bring about, of the death or long prison term he might serve as an outcome of that trial—he thought not. And the fear for the part that Helen would suffer in his punishment was outweighed by the graver danger she must now be in.

Brink in Kearney! Helen at the old house!

There was only one thing to think of now. Could he get there in time to save her?

"Get over—feed her oil as she needs it," Morris hoarsely bade his chauffeur, and sprang himself to the wheel.

And then began a drive that missed death and destruction only by lucky chance, and left the police of at least four municipalities gnashing their teeth over the failure to read a number that flashed by them and away more quickly than the designers of those numbers had ever dreamed could occur off a race-track.

Lucky chance got them aboard a Fort Lee ferry before the policeman who had last taken up the chase had found where they had turned from Broadway, and the same chance willed that the ferry's gates had to be held open for their hurried boarding of the boat.

Down the Hudson County Boulevard Morris dashed, then moved the spark up to the last notch and roared across the meadows. Only at sight of the Bellville Bridge's frame did he slow for the last turn into the River Road. A half-mile of hair-raising turns and spring-testing bumps and—

Brushing the tears from eyes burning and half blinded he peered across the unkempt lawn at the old house, black, deserted, empty.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### MORRIS SEES A GHOST.

FIVE minutes of hurried search through the old dwelling with the chauffeur's trouble lamp was enough to realize to Morris his worst fears. The only scrap of evi-

dence he found was the broken oil lamp in a puddle of kerosene on the floor of that room where he had once killed a man.

He had gone through the place from attic to cellar with goose-pimples and raised hair, half fearful of each room he entered, lest he stumble over the dead and decayed body of that man—or worse, the body of his sweetheart.

Outside again, he reflected on the groundlessness of such fears. For four months and a half none had discovered that body. Little likelihood that it had lain in an open room all that while. The thought was almost as disquieting as the more groundless fear. He who had hidden one body so well could hide another.

The terrific speed at which he had been driving had precluded any thinking. He had but one thought from the start, to get here in time. And he had not got here in time.

What could he do next? Telephone to her father and mother? They were already doing as much as they could. Go to the police? No doubt they had been warned by Mr. Rainsford.

But he knew of what none other seemed to know much if anything. The detective had mentioned the motor-boat. And he had had full experience of what the little craft could do. Also he knew something of the means of reaching motor-boats through the harbor police.

Only Brink had not gone home in the motor-boat. He had called up Florence and demanded a motor-car to get him home. Why would he do that when the silent, swift boat provided means for his return without making his whereabouts known to his family or any one outside the party with which he had come here?

Anyhow, Ballard doubted if the tale of the boat had not been some sheer ruse, a part of that used to lure Helen to the house of danger.

He climbed back into his car. But he sat still, unable to decide which way to turn until he heard the swift putter of a motor cycle rattling along the road over which he had just come. Considering that speed, and the fact that he had breezed past a motorcycle policeman somewhere just about what he imagined must be Kearney's boundary-line, he decided that he had best get into motion again.

He reached down and pressed the lever of the starter. Then, startled by the sudden nearness of the motorcycle's roar, he shoved in a clutch too soon. The policeman was alongside before the starter could be set going again.

"You're under arrest," the man snapped in a voice that vibrated with an honest indignation, for which Morris could hardly blame him. "You was going sixty mile if you was goin' one; and I'm mistaken if it wasn't nearer seventy-five. You —"

"Forget about it, that's a good fellow," Morris broke in on him. "I've a hundred reasons for coming here as fast as I did, and a hundred more why you should forget it. But here's a better reason than any for you."

He had dived into his pocket and produced a roll of bills. Touching a tiny lamp on the dash, he was in the act of peeling off a fifty-dollar note when the officer snapped curtly:

"Put 'em back in your pocket. Save 'em for some other cop. It don't go with me; see? And they won't do for the judge, if I don't miss my guess. Wha'd'ya think you was on—Ormonde Beach or Coney Island race-track?"

"No," Morris answered impatiently, "I thought I might prevent a crime, a murder for all I know. But I haven't time to tell you about it. Come on down to the station, if you insist. Maybe the captain can tell me a little more than I know."

"It oughtn't to be hard," snapped the policeman who possessed a common human dislike for people who didn't think him worth bothering with. "The captain will want to know about that crime stuff, too."

And Morris proceeded to give him the run of his life. The idea of appealing to the police seemed about as sensible as any, especially since he hadn't any of his own. There was the possibility that they knew all about the things he wanted to know.

By the time the station was reached Morris was more than a block ahead. He was half way to the desk inside when the officer got the props under his motorcycle. The traffic man rushed in after him, to hear him ask:

"Captain, do you know anything about Miss Helen Rainsford?"

The policeman checked his expressions of outraged dignity before the look he saw on the captain's face and the question his superior sent back to his prisoner:

"Good Lord! How did you get here so quick?"

"Huh?" gasped Morris, in surprise no less than that of his recent captor.

"You're Mr. Morris—Morris Ballard, aren't you?" came one more inquiry.

"Yes—how did you know?"

"Never mind how I know. You're wanted up in East Orange. The number is—no, that's the telephone number — forty-four Wilmot Terrace."

"Her house! Who—who wants me? What is it? I don't understand," Morris stammered in amazed confusion.

"They all want you—go on up. I'll attend to telephoning them. You must have started before you got the message, though. We only left word with your man at the hotel about ten minutes ago. If you'd got here five minutes earlier you could have gone right on with the others. But—"

"Say, man, what are you talking about? How did you know about me?—about my man?—who telephoned?—what?"

"Miss Brink," answered the officer—"is the one that telephoned—but they want you to come right on up. So, don't ask me any more questions. Just beat it."

The traffic officer slipped out ahead. As Morris got back into his car, only a faint murmur could be heard of the rattling fire of the motorcycle. It seemed headed eastward, toward the meadows.

And Morris proceeded to beat it in accordance with the captain's orders. Having nothing else to beat he used the speed ordinance again.

It seemed that there was something of a party. Two taxicabs and a splendid touring-car stood at the curb. As Morris's machine came to a halt the front door was thrown open. But whoever opened it managed to disappear from view and to leave the hall empty.

Morris stepped inside, glanced around, puzzled.

"Morris!" His heart gave a great leap. He turned into the parlor. Pushing back the *portières* he saw her alone.

It was enough. Pale, wan, propped up with pillows on a divan—her eyes shone with the light of love.

"Helen!"

He was beside her, on his knees, his arms clasping her frail shoulders, his lips moist with her tears. It was enough.

To-morrow he might go to a cell—he could not yet be sure of anything. Perhaps Brink would carry out his threats to the bitter end; perhaps she would be dragged into the ugly mess the powerful millionaire could make of it all.

He knew now that Helen would rather go through the valley of the shadow of death with him than to live in kings' palaces without him. He had her—had her now—would have her heart and her love so long as they both should live.

The past with its unanswered and unanswerable questions, the future with its dark forebodings—mattered not. He had her. It was enough.

Neither of them spoke. No words were needed. They would never ask the question and answer it in words to make a formal betrothal. But it was no diffidence, no fear that held them from speech. They knew without speech.

How long they remained thus they could not guess. A second or an eternity—or both.

And then Morris was startled by a heavy voice clearing a husky throat, a warning that the owner of the voice was approaching. Doubly startled—for the voice was that of the man who had owned him, held him, ruled him while he befriended, enriched and seemed to love. Brink!

As Morris drew back to a more conventional distance from his sweetheart, the big man cleared his throat again, then noisily turned the latch of the door that separated the rear-parlor of the cottage from the dining-room. A scuffling, as of a number of feet, sounded on the hard-wood floor.

"Sorry to intrude," boomed forth the millionaire's most ceremonial tone. "We must be getting back to the city, though. And there's a good deal to be straightened out before we can start."

He came on into the centre of the room. The others had halted behind the partition dividing the two rooms. Morris stared in amaze at a face streaked with blood-stained plasters. But the eyes were shining.

"I'll never sleep another wink until I've done what I can and all I can to make up for the most brutal treatment I ever inflicted on a woman. To-night I struck her in the dark. For four months I have been striking at her heart. I can't ask her forgiveness. I can never forgive myself. I have been mad—mad. But the cloud has lifted now—at least far enough so that I can see the shining of the sun beneath it. And now I see the madness as it was.

"And now—Florence, Howard! Come here, you rascally runaways. Mr. Morris, permit me to introduce to you my daughter

and her husband, Mrs. and Mr. Howard Van Cleef! I understand you have met both of them before."

Morris stared with blinking eyes. There could be no doubt about it. Florence was there. Young Van Cleef was there. And in Florence's lovely eyes was the light that had never shown for her ex-fiancé. And he was glad for her—but amazingly puzzled.

"Shipwrecked last night," Brink explained. "Mr. Van Cleef has been in the war zone so long that he forgot his Spanker III isn't a submarine or even a torpedo. The results of his belligerence are two badly smashed boats that were all mahogany and pretty nice, and—a wedding. Which last is going to upset a very pretty schedule to the apparent satisfaction of all concerned. Even the jilted almost-bridegroom looks as if he might readily be consoled.

"But, before I go any further, I want to introduce to Mr. Morris—Ballard, I should say—another person whom he has met before, but without the formalities of a conventional introduction. Frank!—Mr. Morris; Mr. Morris—er Ballard—Mr. Frank J. Beller, known to vaudeville as Resurrecting Pluto, the Dying Wonder.

"You may recall that Mr. Beller was present at our first meeting, Morris. You were probably not aware that he—"

But he broke off. Morris's gasp of momentary fear, which passed away but left him still in utter amazement, brought a laugh from those present. It might amuse others, but Morris Ballard did not laugh.

He gripped the back of a chair and held his swaying body from a complete collapse only by tremendous effort.

Men no longer believe in ghosts, but the vestiges of that belief remain in the minds of the most skeptical. No man can behold alive one whom he believes dead without something of a start.

And for four months Morris Ballard had allowed another to dominate him, rule him, spy upon him and the girl he loved, force him into an unwished marriage with an unwishing bride; for four months, though he had lived in outward splendor almost regal, he had been in heart and mind a fugitive from the hand of the law, blackmailed into money but out of everything he truly desired, his very name and face and life dropped, to be replaced with an alias, a masking beard, a life not of his making or to his taste; for more than a third of a year he had dreamed in terror of some change in the whim of the man who held him, fear had been his ruling motive, the whip behind every act and word; for a long season one dearer to him than himself had suffered agonies of mind and body until she now lay there hardly more than a meager hope of restoration to her former self; for four months he had shuddered, waking and sleeping, at the horrid memory of a crumpled form, lifeless limbs that dropped limp from hands that touched them, a still face with staring eyes and a dull blue scar that had never failed to sicken him at thought that he had caused it.

And now before him stood the man he had slain! The cheaply clad circus freak, scar, staring eyes, and all, was the living, breathing thing that had lain dead on the floor in the old house by the river!

And the man who had brought it about, the man who had used all that horror to terrify him and torture Helen that he might gain his own ends—was saying—

"You were probably not aware that he also ran the boat back with us to my float at Fort Washington Park immediately after. Since the stage grew tired of Pluto's rather gruesome stunt of dying so dead only a physician could prove him alive he has become a very clever motor-boat engineer. I might, it seems, be considerably richer tonight, had I let you see his face then."

A wave of deep wrath swept over Morris. For the poor freak he had no resentment. But Brink was responsible; Brink had used the thing; Brink had played the cruel trick to the end; worst of all, Brink had known the torture it had inflicted on Helen.

Morris rose to his feet. His uncontrollable impulse was to hurl himself upon the big old man and choke him to death. Once more Brink paused in his easy, cheerful speech. He shrunk back a little, then recovered his poise.

"The ladies, Morris," he reminded Ballard softly—he who had driven one of them to the edge of death or madness and confessed that he had struck her. Yet there was that odd, inconsistent tenderness in the quiet words which made them genuine, real, sincere—and effective.

"Wait until I tell the rest, Morris," he went on.

To the others had now been added Mr. and Mrs. Rainsford. And in their tired faces it was plainly writ that they too were waiting to forgive perhaps, but more likely to hate forever.

"I congratulate you, Miss Rainsford. Morris certainly behaves much better than your friend Herman Adams. I thought the man would bellow his head off and shake his bones to pieces when he saw his victim rise from the dead." But this attempt of Brink's to ease the situation failed as sadly as his other jests.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### NOT ALL BRUTE.

BRINK seemed quite filled with joy over Florence's marriage to Van Cleef. Morris learned afterward that he had laughed and wept at the station-house like a hysterical girl over the details of the difficulties of the wrecked man and woman who had found themselves stranded and penniless, no farther away from home than Staten Island, but five cents' fare from friend or acquaintance, and resolved to return only as man and wife.

The securing of a license with a begged dollar and the embarrassment of leaving a minister without any fee were something of a tale in themselves.

But Brink seemed now to comprehend that his joy did not set him right with those he had injured. His manner grew more seriously anxious—anxious to obtain the goodwill of those he seemed to insist on retaining as his friends.

"Now, you people who have all the reason in the world to consider me a monster beyond words, I'm not going to leave you until I tell you all the little excuse I have—and leave it to you if a man might not become insane enough over it to do some things which already begin to look monstrous to me as well as irrational.

"Twenty-one years ago I lived with a rough partner alone on the side of a mountain in upper Colorado. We were prospectors, barely provisioned for the winter. One night, as a wild blizzard began the winter, we had scarcely made ourselves snug for the idle game of cards with which we would while away our time, when a cry for help called us outside.

"A father and daughter were there. The man had tramped for miles and carried the girl. He died before morning.

"And the girl was beautiful—as beautiful as I think my daughter is now. Bill Durk loved her from the first moment he saw her. I loved her the same. Both of us were over forty. Perhaps we should have known better, should have played fathers instead of lovers.

"But the sight of her had made us young again. And it seemed to us a scandalous thing that the beautiful girl should come forth in the spring and go back to the towns only twenty miles away with no hope of keeping secret the fact that she had spent the winter in our house.

"Durk and I were both Scotch—he by birth, and I by immediate descent. Both of us had always believed, what I understand is the doctrine of the only church that counts marriage a sacrament—that marriage is made by the contracting parties. In Scotch law an agreement between a man and woman to be husband and wife is valid. I had uncles in Scotland who had never been married otherwise.

"We two talked it over, while the girl slept. We agreed—we could not afford to disagree up there in that wilderness with the winter to spend together or with one of us dead—we agreed that one must marry the girl. We would leave it to her choice.

"And she chose me. I promised to take her to a real clergyman in the spring to satisfy her scruples. And—Heaven knows the happiness we found in love. For her love bridged the chasm in our years, our mode of life; and we were one."

Brink wiped a little perspiration from his forehead as he swallowed something heavy in his throat. For a moment he stood still, drawing long breaths to get back his voice.

"That was a terrible winter," he finally resumed. "Our supplies gave out almost entirely. All we could get was meat. And things were made worse by Bill. He had gone surly. Maybe I would have done the same if I had lost what he lost. He grew reckless in eating the game we managed to snare or shoot in our own back yard. When the first real break came to make it possible for a strong man to get to town, he was a hopeless, feeble cripple with scurvy.

"It was for me to get to town and quickly, or we should all die. I started. When I had finished half the journey, attempting to hurry a little by riding the mule I had had to lead most of the way, I was thrown.

"Amnesia occurred quickly to my mind as an accounting for Morris's disappearance. It was because of my own sad experience. For six months I wandered over the mountains and in and out of the towns, a poor derelict, feeding when men gave me

food or I could find it, starving sometimes for days, only saved from death by the tremendous physical constitution nature had given me.

"At length I came to. I was a hundred miles from home. I walked back—never mind any account of the experience. And I found that my wife had been saved from death of scurvy in the spring by a chance wanderer who had got vegetable food for her and Durk—but only to die in giving birth to our child in the fall.

"And Durk, his advances rebuffed through all the summer, had vented his dour jealousy by letting her be buried under the name of her father. I found my child, did what I could to wipe out the possible stigma by having her christened with my full surname, and filing papers of adoption. Then came the luck that had so long eluded us.

"And three years later Durk came on here to New York to begin his systematic blackmailing. Oh, I wish I had taken the chance of killing him. I pitied him at first, paid him before he spoke his threats. But his demands grew larger. And my love for my little girl was the center of my life.

"Of course there are better things than a place in the so-called best society of New York. When I came back here from the great mountains I wanted to give my child all that life could hold for a woman. I had the gold to do it. I saw what other women bought with gold; and I set about its purchase.

"Durk constantly increased his demands. Then my daughter became an object of love for young men, rich and desirable—men with whom marriage would mean establishment socially and otherwise. And Durk's threats were narrowed.

"Twice I paid him only to keep away from the man she was about to marry. I was anxious that she should marry. A married woman might face such an exposure as a single one could not. And I was beginning to see that Durk wanted more than my mere money.

"He wanted to suck me dry—wreck me. He has already more money than he and all his friends can spend in fifty years. And both times he played false after I had paid. The scoundrel knew that half his hold on me would be gone when Florence was married.

"He never left those young men an option of paying. He promised to publish the bit of knowledge to which he held the key if they did not break their engagements. And they broke them for Florence's sake more than for their own.

"And then I chanced to see this man with his weird death act. And I thought I saw a chance. If I could stage a play to make him think he had committed a murder, I could drive him forever out of my life.

"His demands came oftener and oftener. And I had plenty of opportunity to teach him that he could come to the deserted old homestead in which I was born. I let him get away safely until he grew fearless enough to come alone. And then I prepared the trap—

"And Morris walked into it. Frank here had no means of knowing who was to be the victim of his feinted attack, who was to deliver a blow that should seem to kill him. And when Morris came I expected the other immediately and was afraid to let him go again.

"And then Miss Rainsford raised the outcry—spoiled the game entirely. And I was in an unreasoning fury. I determined to keep Morris away until I had the chance to arrange for a repetition of the drama. He might expose it.

"Then Durk told Howard Van Cleef. Again there was a broken engagement. And gossipy persons were remarking their growing number. And I thought of a fresh use for my power over Morris. He was a gentleman in manners, of good appearance, manly; I was sure Florence would like him, I hoped she would love him.

"Oh, I did not dream of the consequences to this poor young lady. But Durk was on my back day and night. He was desperate with the idea that I had attempted to do away with him. He was resolved to finish my fortune as fast as he might. And I grew desperate and more desperate.

"It has taken me all this while to get him back to the old house. He would agree only on condition that he might bring an armed guard and station it outside the building. And it was ten million dollars in gold and negotiable securities that he expected to carry away if he came.

And once more I saw Miss Rainsford looming as a danger to my plan. From the beginning I had had her movements watched, since she seemed bent on finding and rescuing the man she loved. Last night she saw us.

"I telephoned the threat to arrest her. I had already ordered Morris to telephone her to keep away. Already I was having to sop my conscience—two hundred thousand dollars lay deposited to her credit in the First National Bank of Newark. I have given her the message I had written and prepared to send the moment the marriage was accomplished.

"And to-night she thwarted me again. That is all. I knew what Durk would do—what I don't doubt he did. I lost myself. For months now there have been mad moments which added to my fears lest Florence be left without a protector, moments when I did not know what I did.

"Now—I think they are past. Howard's love has found a quicker way to beat Durk than all my designing. And he thought that Florence knew what I still waited until the last moment to tell her. And now she knows—

"And we are going to face the world if need be. Howard is satisfied with Scotch law, and Florence. And you two, and your parents here—can you forgive?"

Brink's voice was a broken plea of utter repentance for his half-mad cruelties. All that was kind and good and lovable in his big personality shone in his eager eyes.

Helen was the first to reach forth her hand. Then she added a little push to Morris's arm to second the impulse to which he was about to yield. Mrs. Rainsford came forward slowly, tremulously.

"And you?"

The two fathers faced each other a full moment. The mild-mannered little man was tense and white. Such men hate not easily, and forgive less easily. Slowly Rainsford lifted his hands.

"And you'll let me arrange for the transfer of the little fund?" urged Brink. "Your daughter won't need it now. She'll have all Morris's money."

Rainsford drew back his hand.

"Never!" he cried. "Never! Money cannot repay. I can forgive, but not take a price for my daughter's very life-blood."

"Not repay—it can repair a little. I am a father, too. Don't think I imagine I can repay. But—oh, for forgiveness sake, to relieve a little the burden on my mind—won't you?"

"What money will she have of mine? What"—Morris was asking as he spoke.

He, too, felt a sudden gorge at this seeming attempt to square for broken hearts with cheap gold. Brink had not heeded him, however. And now, with a tear quivering on an eyelash of each of them, the two fathers were clasping hands.

"What money of yours?" Brink turned with a relieved smile upon Morris now. "Why—your money. Do you think I can't compel you to keep it, after all the practise I've had in running you? You can't return it without getting my signature on some form of acceptance.

"Oh, come now, you know you've been itching to put your own claws into that business and see what you can do with it all by yourself. Go to it. I'll trust you not to let it rot dead on your hands anyhow."

For a night and almost a day Helen had slept. Her mother had told Morris there was a smile on her wan lips. And he had known that, under the tired lids, there was a light in the eyes.

There was color in her cheeks when he was at length permitted to see her. The doctor had ordered out-of-door air, and Morris helped to draw her, in a wheeled chair, to a little upper balcony.

For an hour they talked—talked of the future, of a speedy marriage, of a winter in the south on Ballard's splendid yacht, of the health already throwing its returning color into her cheeks.

And they watched the sun sink slowly down over Orange Mountain. The darkness crept on deeper and deeper.

"Why, Morris," Helen suddenly exclaimed. "Morris! See, it is getting dark."

"Yes," he answered, a little startled by her seeming interest in so utterly obvious and usual a matter as the coming of the night. "Did you want to go in now?"

"No—it's not that. But, Morris—ever since that evening when, as the darkness was upon us, you went into that awful house—and the darkness deepened black and blacker—ever since then—this hour has seemed to me almost too terrible to be borne."

"We'll go in right away," he hastily answered, rising and fumbling for the mechanical device that released a brake on the chair.

"No—I don't want to go in. I want to stay. Morris—the dusk is turning to dark—but the dark is only promise of another dawn."

THE END.

# Shorty's Theory

by Mollie Frank Ellis

HILLARD, sitting in the shade of Badger City's wooden court-house, knew what had happened almost before Shorty Greggs, the marshal, came leaping across the street from the Palace saloon.

Hillard had heard the two quick shots, and after a second of tense silence, the high-pitched, savage tones of Pinto Jake and the hoarse, angry voices of the men. He was on his feet as Shorty sprang up the steps.

"It's Pinto Jake!" gasped the marshal. "He's run amuck, sheriff! Crazy as a mad dog in August! He shot Red Dillon and come nigh to gettin' old man Guthrie; then he lit out through the back door for the hills. I think I winged him, but not so as to interfere with his getaway.

"I was kinda handicapped," he continued apologetically, "by not bein' right on the ground at the time. I was in next door at the express office helpin' arrange for that shipment of gold-dust and so I didn't get on to things till I heard the rumpus. Your posse is formin'. Come on."

Hillard swung open the door of his room, snatched up his sombrero, jerked his extra gun from its rack above his bed and ran to where his mount stood at the hitch-rack.

For years the room in the southwest corner of Badger City's court-house had been each succeeding sheriff's headquarters; and for as many years there had stood at the court-house hitch-rack night and day a sturdy mustang, saddled and bridled and ready for instant use. Justice, in Yavapia, is often a matter of expedition.

Already a little group of mounted men were gathered in front of the Palace saloon. The sheriff reined up before them.

"Why way did he go, Harvey?" he snapped. "The mesquite trail? All right. Come on, men."

He wheeled his horse about and at the head of his posse swung down the dusty main street of little Badger City, past the glittering gilded signs in front of the long row of saloons, the wide dark entrance of the livery stable and the huge, plate-glass windows of Rickett's dry goods emporium. At the end of the street he turned sharply into a side road, which led between rows of whitewashed miners' cabins to the sage-brush desert beyond the town.

They had gone a mile along the trail that stretched between Badger City and the sandhills which formed Mesquite Ridge when the sheriff edged his mount over beside that of the marshal. His face was pallid under its heavy coat of tan.

Shorty looked up at him in surprise.

"What's the matter, Bill?" he asked.

"Did you say it was old man Guthrie that Pinto Jake came near killing?" queried Hillard in a low voice.

"Yep; but he didn't get him. Why?"

"Because," the young sheriff's tone was grim, "if old Guthrie is in town then Mary is alone at the ranch and right in Pinto's path if he takes the lower fork of the trail across the ridge!"

Shorty's eyes bulged.

"Good Lord!" he muttered. Then with

an effort at encouragement, "but the Mexicans will be there, Bill."

"The greasers will all be out working on the ranch this time of day," replied Hillard. "There won't be a soul at the house but the Chink who cooks for them. My God! We've got to catch him before he gets there, Short—you know Pinto Jake!"

Shorty's mouth shut with a snap.

"I think," he answered, "that I am acquainted with Pinto and his nice little ways. But don't you worry, Hillard; we'll get there first!"

The marshal, whose own sweetheart was safe at home in little Badger City, cast a commiserating glance at the young sheriff's face, sharp and drawn with fear, and hurried on.

"Mary always has a gun handy, Bill—you know the old man taught her that." Then as Hillard made no reply, he added: "And Pinto ain't likely to take the lower fork anyhow. He'll be plumb sure to turn up the other way at the bottom of the ridge. Past the Guthrie ranch is the long way across and Pinto Jake won't be forgetting that. This ain't no handicap race for Pinto; he's got to put some miles under him quick, and he knows it."

"It's the long way across, but the easy way, too, Short," replied the young sheriff soberly. "There is hardly a bridle path up the left ravine and the hills are sharp. And besides," his lips tightened, "men like Pinto Jake always do the thing you're hoping they won't."

His naturally keen eyes, now sharpened by his poignant fear for the woman he loved, swept the horizon ahead of him. Suddenly he bent forward, then threw his hand above his head. The posse, answering the well-known signal, closed in around him.

But not a pony broke its steady gait. These were experienced riders of the trail who knew the value of time, and who had seen life and death hang in the balance of a single minute.

"What is it?" cried Shorty.

"Pinto Jake," answered Hillard, and pointed with his quirt. "If he's on that roan mustang of his, and I reckon he is, there isn't a horse in Yavapia that can catch him!"

Far out across the level of sand and cactus scrub a small cloud of dust was drifting rapidly before them, straight as a bird flies toward Mesquite Ridge. There was a smothered oath from old man Harvey, whose usually genial face, in its frame of gray hair, looked grim and forbidding under the shadow of his sombrero.

Beside him Roulette Pete growled deep in his throat and brought his rawhide down upon his horse's flank. With one accord the ponies sprang forward into that tireless lope of the Western bronco, which eats up the miles with the speed and regularity of machinery.

No one spoke again. No other words were necessary to these veterans of the manhunt. To them that little cloud of dust was pregnant with sinister significance.

After a time Shorty, who had been watching the young sheriff's set features, ventured another word of cheer.

"Pinto ain't nobody's fool, Bill. He'll take the left gulch where there won't be anybody to interfere with his getaway. He'd know that if he went up past the Guthrie place some of them greasers would see him and send us word."

"You're right about Pinto being nobody's fool, my friend," admitted Hillard grimly, "and for that very reason he won't try the left ravine, where he couldn't go a hundred yards in the same length of time that we were putting away a mile out here after him. He's had one eye over his shoulder ever since he left town, or he isn't Pinto Jake. He knows he's got just one chance and that is the smooth, easy road past the Guthrie ranch. He can go as fast or faster than we can, and if he keeps this far ahead of us he'll win out to the border before we can nab him.

"My hope is," the sheriff continued in a lower voice, "that he is sufficiently sobered now by what has happened to realize his danger. In that case he will ride straight through the ranch without a stop. He will do it, I believe," he finished seriously, "if nothing comes up to interfere with him; but Pinto Jake would have no mercy on anything or anybody who stood in his way."

"Well," answered the marshal, drawing a long breath as if in preparation for the coming crisis, "we'll soon know; we're about to the ridge."

They galloped up to where the Mesquite Trail divided at the edge of the foothills. The right and wider road ran for a short distance along the edge of the hills, then opened out into the valley wherein lay the Guthrie lands.

Though the Guthrie holdings were mostly ore deposits in the surrounding hills, it was, in this country of sand and burning sun, gratefully called "the ranch" because of its few irrigated acres of green and its huge, homelike ranch-house.

The left, or upper trail, which was scarcely more than a bridle path, climbed its precipitous way through the steep but narrow range of hills and crossed the border into Mexico miles ahead of the other route.

Suddenly the young sheriff gave a sharp exclamation. "Look, Short! Up the left gully, there!"

Both men swerved their steeds into the upper ravine. Not a hundred yards before them lay Pinto Jake's roan mustang, foam-flecked and gasping and with one leg doubled up beneath his body.

The marshal and the posse reined up around it, but Hillard spurred on up the gulch and, rising in his saddle, eagerly searched the boulder-strewn slopes. There was no sign of the desperado, however, so he turned back to where the men stood in a silent group around the fallen horse.

The roan mustang, seeming to feel that friends had come to its succor, raised its head and whinnied entreatingly.

"Poor devil!" said the tender hearted marshal. "The scoundrel didn't even wait to put the little feller out of his misery. See any signs of him, Bill?"

"No," answered Hillard. "Shoot the horse, Shorty; we can't save him, and the little beast looks all tuckered out with pain.

"Now listen here, you fellows," he went on with a sudden change of tone, "Pinto's up that ravine somewhere, I reckon, seeing as his nag is here. But he *may* have cut across into the other trail far enough up that we couldn't find his boot tracks from here. He can't get away without a horse, and the only place he can find one is at Guthrie's.

"He may be hid up in the rocks, waiting till night, or till we have gone ahead. He may have a dozen things in his mind to do, but we don't know 'em. There's just one thing I do know, though, and that is this: not one step farther do I go after Pinto till I find out if Mary Guthrie is safe! It looks as if he was up here somewhere, and I know I run a big chance of letting him get away; but I'm going up to the Guthrie ranch if it means you elect another sheriff this fall in Yavapia! Dad Harvey, you and Pete stay here and guard this gully in case Pinto should try to backtrack. The rest of you follow me!"

"You're right, Bill," sympathized old man Harvey, earnestly. "We-all ain't so specially anxious for Pinto's carcass. What we-all want is his room instead of his company. And there ain't another little gal in all Yavapia like Mary Guthrie—except my Sallie."

The young sheriff searched each face, and one after another the stern-eyed men nodded their acquiescence. The blood rushed to Hillard's cheeks.

"Thanks, men," he said huskily. "I'll not forget it. Now, forward!"

The posse reined into the road that led to the Guthrie ranch. They had gone but a few hundred yards, however, when Hillard, who led the way, brought his pony sharply to a halt and slipped from his saddle to the ground.

The marshal stopped and stood waiting. "What is it, Bill?" he sang out.

Then as his eye caught the tenseness of the sheriff's kneeling figure he sprang from his mount and joined him.

"Boot tracks! Just what I thought!" snapped Hillard to the posse. "And running like the devil! We're not far behind him, boys! Get a move on now!"

At the end of the narrow ravine, where the road widened into the open valley, a bold crag jutted out into the path. As the posse rounded this Hillard, who was in advance, gave a sharp exclamation of horror.

The Guthrie ranch lay in full view before them. There, in front of the ranch house, mounted for her daily canter, was Mary Guthrie; and running swiftly toward her, gun in hand, was Pinto Jake!

Hillard whipped out his revolver and sent a bullet singing across the wide space between them. He knew he was out of gun range, but he hoped the sound would cause the desperado to falter, if only for a moment.

But Pinto Jake's only acknowledgment of the shot was a greater burst of speed. The young sheriff groaned aloud.

"If he would only stumble!" he gritted between his set teeth. "*Anything* that would get us thirty seconds closer to him! If only I hadn't wasted that half minute talking!"

"You couldn't know, Bill," insisted the marshal, loyal to his friend. "The ordinary man woulda gone on up that ravine, and

the ordinary sheriff woulda followed him. You was the one who wanted to come up here. We'd all have been back there yet!"

"But I shouldn't have wasted a minute!" groaned Hillard. "I might have known Pinto wasn't an ordinary man! He'd know that hiding up there was only the beginning of the finish for him, and he'd risk everything on a last chance. He was making for the Guthrie stables for a horse, and there it is right before him! And not a man about! My God! Not a man about, but the chink cook!"

The Chinaman was at the woodpile and at the sound of the gun they saw him turn. Instantly he seemed to realize the situation —the fleeing desperado, the galloping posse, his beloved young mistress.

And suddenly there was born in the heart of that little yellow man a courage that is stronger than the fear of death. With a billet of wood in his hand he slipped to the corner of the shed which stood in Pinto's path and as the bad man passed he hurled it with all his might.

It took Pinto in the side and felled him to the ground. The little Chinaman scuttled away with the speed of terror, but before he could escape the desperado was up and had poured a fusillade of bullets into his body.

Even before the sound of the shots reached the posse they saw him crumple into a heap upon the sands. But the delay had been fatal to Pinto. The posse's shots rained all about him and it seemed to Hillard that any second might see the end.

Then Pinto accomplished the unexpected!

Realizing his situation, and knowing that the half minute needed to give him a chance for his life on Mary Guthrie's mount was not to be his, he stopped short and leveled his gun straight at the shrinking girl. Then he threw up his hand in a warning gesture to the posse.

As one man they reined in on the instant and stood motionless. They knew well the significance of that motion.

Another step, a shot from them, and Mary Guthrie's life would be snuffed out like a candle! Hillard's face was gray.

"For God's sake, men, don't move!" he cried.

And Pinto Jake, hearing, smiled in ruthless triumph. The desperado's evil eyes gleamed from out of his drawn, pasty face with the savage fury of a trapped animal. It was plain to be seen that he would show no mercy.

For what seemed to Hillard an eternity they stood thus, each side warily watching for the slightest movement upon the part of the enemy, and each side hopeless as to the outcome.

Suddenly there was a shot that roared through the tense silence like the crash of doom. Pinto Jake spun about and dropped to the earth. In another moment Hillard was beside Mary Guthrie and his arms closed round her limp form as she slid from her horse.

The men gathered about the dead ruffian, but Shorty followed Hillard and his burden into the house. An old Mexican woman met them at the door. She threw up her hands at sight of Mary Guthrie's white face.

"The little señorita!" she wailed. "Dead —dead!"

"No such stuff!" snapped Shorty. "Bring water! Quick! Do you hear?"

The old woman fled to the kitchen. But the girl had already opened her eyes. With a frightened cry she threw her arms around Hillard's neck and hid her face on his breast.

Shorty backed away discreetly and tiptoed out to where the men stood.

"She's comin' round all right," he announced with a grin. "Leastways, if I was her feller it would suit me all right."

The men eyed him with admiration.

"Doggone you, Short Greggs," burst out Chuck Williams, "it was that trick of hipshootin' that elected you marshal of Badger City. Badger's so plumb loaded up with human gunpowder these days that she's gettin' scary. She likes her marshal to have an extra ace up his sleeve for emergencies. And the Lord knows he'll need it if he stays marshal long!"

"Shucks, boys!" deprecated Shorty. Then looking down at the dead man he continued: "How are we goin' to get him to town? I don't feel exactly like borrowin' a wagon of old man Guthrie, everything considered."

Dad Harvey leaned suddenly against his horse's flank. He ran a tremulous hand through his white hair; his seamed and wrinkled face quivered.

"I ain't carin' if we leave him to the coyotes," he said huskily. "My gal Sallie is jest that little gal's age."

No one else spoke a word, but each man stood looking down into Pinto Jake's face

(savage even in death) with stern, unrelenting eyes.

Abruptly Hillard emerged from the house and came striding up to the group. His face was dark with anger.

"Who fired that shot?" he demanded.

"Why, er . . . it just happened to be me," faltered the marshal modestly.

Hillard's hands slowly clenched.

"I'll thank you first," he said thickly, "because it turned out all right and Mary is safe. And then . . . then I think I'll kill you!"

Through the silence which followed his words his labored breathing could be heard distinctly. The men stood staring. Shorty's jaw dropped, his round face lost its jolly grin and his childlike blue eyes grew hurt and troubled.

"Shorty Greggs," Hillard's voice was like the bite of acid, "how *dared* you fire that shot?"

Every man except the marshal started as if struck. In the triumph of the outcome they had all forgotten the risk to Mary Guthrie's life which the marshal had deliberately taken.

But at Hillard's question Shorty instantly recovered his composure. He ran his eye around the circle of accusing faces and smiled cheerfully.

"Oh, that?" he said lightly. "Well, boys, you see I'm a great feller for theory. So when Pinto held us up thataway I says to myself, 'Now, Short, here's a plumb splendid place to try out that notion you got out of the newspaper the other day.' It's surprisin' what a feller can learn from the papers, boys—you'd all ought to read 'em more.

"Well, in this here paper there was a regular scorcher of an article by a scientific guy a-givin' it to a man that wrote a book where the villain got shot and the book man puts it that the last thing the villain heard on earth was the sound of the shot that killed him. Now this scientific guy tore his hair about that. He 'lowed that anybody who had sense enough to get in out of the rain ought to know that a bullet can out-travel a noise, and he projects that considerin' the distance the villain was from the chap that shot him he'd a-been dead about a second and a half before the noise could have reached to where he stood.

"Well, you-all saw that poor chink drop to the earth and wriggle round before the sound of the shots reached us, didn't you? So after that I says to myself, 'Short, they ain't no other way out of this—we-all can't stand here thisaway till Judgment Day! The thing for you to do is to try out that scientific chap's theory. And so," he grinned like a boy who feels sure of parental approval, "I done it."

There was a tense, still, moment. Then Hillard spoke.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said in a low shaken voice, "that you risked a woman's life on a chance like that?"

Shorty's blue eyes twinkled at him teasingly.

"Why, land now, Bill," he expostulated, "ain't you got her safe and sound? Looks like you'd ought to be satisfied."

Then as Hillard took a forward step: "Hold on, now, partner; I ain't done talkin' yet! You see, boys, me bein' marshal, it's my business to watch for folks like Pinto Jake when they comes visitin' my town and arrange that they gets what accommodations they deserves. Pinto was in Badger all day yesterday. He lost all his money gamblin' and I saw that he was drinkin' himself plumb crazy, so I kinda trailed round after him till he went to sleep last night in Bud Rener's stable.

"This morning I was up some early and I beat him to the Palace saloon. When he come in he hocked his ammunition belt and his other pistol to the bartender for drinks. The only gun left him was this old .45 with the notches in the handle," and he touched the dead man's weapon with his foot. "I reckon that gun has got the biggest graveyard record of any revolver this side of the Gila. I missed the rumpus—when he fixed Red Dillon and come near to gettin' old man Guthrie—because they had called me into the express office to arrange about that gold shipment. But I heard the shots, and not havin' anything special on my mind just that particular second I counted 'em. Then when he dropped the little chink out there by the shed I noticed he was plumb excited; for he wasted some bullets and I counted them!"

He grinned genially at Hillard and wiped his forehead with his big, red handkerchief.

"I'm a great feller for theories," he continued, "but I'm long on havin' 'em backed up by facts. I knowed Pinto didn't have but one gun, and I knowed that gun was *empty!* Is Mary comin' round all right now, Bill?"

# The Baffling Game

by Keene Thompson

THE girl was crying. Charlie O'Neill, as he stood on the threshold of the parlor to which she had summoned him, perceived that fact with a smile.

Which was an unusual thing for a young man to do: To smile at sight of a beautiful maiden in distress. But she hadn't fooled him for a minute, since he had engaged a room in that fashionable boarding-house on the upper West Side within an hour of her own arrival there.

The Sterling Private Detective Agency had not thought it wise to inform him why they wanted him to keep a sharp eye on all the movements of the "dark young woman, about twenty-two, five-feet-four, weight one hundred and eighteen, attractive, speaks with a foreign accent," who had been shadowed by another operative to that brown stone house in the middle of the quiet residential side-street between Central Park and the "L."

Which had made Charlie O'Neill suspect that they wanted her watched for something important. And correspondingly curious to find out what it was. So far he had had no luck in that direction, however.

"Mademoiselle Amélie Lavoir," as she chose to call herself, had not exposed her hand to him in the two weeks that he had been letting her think she had succeeded in infatuating him. That was what she had exerted all the arts of her languishing smile, her dark, eloquent eyes and rich contralto voice to do, from the moment they had met. And that had deepened the mystery of what her game might be.

For on her engagement finger she wore a magnificent diamond solitaire. What object she could have in view, with that stunning token of betrothal blazing on her hand, in trying to turn his or any other man's head with the tricks of a trained coquette, was something Charlie O'Neill had been persistently baffled to understand.

But now, as he regarded the attitude of visible—and likewise faintly audible—grief which he knew she had assumed for his benefit in that armchair across the room, he hoped that he was going to remain in the dark no longer. The time had come, unless he misread the signs, for her to disclose the scheme she was up to.

Crossing the parlor to her side, with his brows knit in a semblance of anxious concern, he dropped his hand lightly on her shoulder.

"You are in trouble!"

Mlle. Lavoir looked up with a start at his touch. She dabbed with the crumpled ball of her handkerchief at her eyes.

They were genuinely wet, the young man saw. Which caused him to pay a mental tribute to her ability as an actress. Doubt-

less anybody else would have supposed the unhappiness she was "registering" was real.

"Such trouble!" she agreed, with a catch in her voice, as she rose to face him. "That is why I have sent for you—my only friend in all this great city. To tell you of the wretched predicament I am in. And to ask your help."

"Anything that I can do—?" he prompted.

"You have seen," dropping a meaning glance to that gorgeous ring which she was twisting round and round on her finger, "that I am—that I *was* engaged. He is of noble birth, the man to whom I promised myself. While I am of what we call at home the *bourgeoisie*. He vowed that he would marry me, all the same. If only I would consent to honor him, as he said, by becoming his wife. I did consent. I believed the protestations of his undying love for me which he made.

"But now, behold, *monsieur,* how he has deceived me. You have wondered that my fiancé has never called upon me in all the time I have been in this house? You supposed, perhaps, that he did not live in this city? He has been here all the time. Stopping at the St. Rupert. That is your most fashionable and expensive hotel—yes?

"It puzzled me, then, to understand how the Comte de Brissac, who told me that he was very poor, could afford to stay at such a place. But I understand it now. He is paying for his apartment there as an investment. Of course he must have costly quarters. If he is to convince the society people whose acquaintance he has gained that he is well-to-do. So that he may marry an American heiress among them. That is what he is trying to do!"

She twisted the ring off her finger and held it out to Charlie on the palm of her hand, with indignantly flashing eyes.

"You have said that you would do anything for me, *mon cher ami,*" she went on. "Will you do only this much? I want to let him know, without so much as one hour's delay, that our engagement is at an end, by sending this ring back to him. But how to do it? That is what my dilemma has been.

"To send it through the mail would not be quick enough nor safe. I will not take it to him myself. His face I never wish to see again. And then I thought of you. I could trust you to deliver it into his hands, I know. If only it is not asking too much —*will* you take the ring back to him."

Charlie promptly accepted the dazzling stone in its circlet of platinum.

"Certainly," he agreed, "I'll see that he gets it."

"But at once?"

She shot the question at him with an anxiously searching look at his face.

"You'll want to write a little note of explanation to go with it?" he suggested, with a reassuring nod, placing the ring carefully in his vest pocket. "Then while you're doing it, I'll go up and get my hat and coat. As soon as you've got the note written, I'll go right down to the St. Rupert."

But five minutes later, when he left the house with the sealed square envelope she had given him in his pocket and her effusive thanks ringing in his ears, Charlie O'Neill did not start right down-town.

Instead, halting around the corner on the avenue, he opened the flap of the envelope, which hadn't yet stuck fast, by running a pencil under it. Then he unblushingly read the note she had requested him to deliver to the Comte de Brissac.

It was frigidly curt, and told no more than she had confided to him—that she was breaking her engagement, after learning of his faithlessness, and returning his ring by the bearer.

A perplexed furrow between his brows, Charlie put the note back in the envelope and carefully re-sealed it.

Then he took out the ring and inspected it for the first time at close range.

It seemed to be a genuine diamond, as near as he could judge. But then, he was not an expert in such matters. He knew some one who was, though. And, mounting the steps of the "L," he rode down-town to that person's place of business.

Entering the Fifth Avenue jewelry establishment of Cole, Loomis & Wade twenty minutes later, Charlie asked if Wade, the junior partner, with whom he was personally acquainted, was in. Learning that he was, Charlie walked to the rear of the store and entered his private office.

"I'd like to have you look at this," Charlie informed his friend, producing the ring from his vest pocket, "and tell me what it's worth."

The other subjected it to an inspection through his jewelers' glass.

"About forty-five hundred dollars," he replied, handing the ring back. "It's a beautiful stone. Blue-white and absolutely flawless. We'd ask at least that much for

one like it. Where did you get it, old man?"

"Oh, I picked it up in the course of my business," Charlie answered, returning the ring to his pocket and rising to take his departure. "I wasn't sure whether it was real or not. Thanks for letting me know."

The puzzled crease had deepened on his forehead, when he reached the sidewalk again. He hadn't made much headway, so far, toward finding out what the girl's game was. A genuine diamond worth forty-five hundred dollars that she had entrusted him with to deliver to a man at one of the city's best hotels—h'm.

Turning north, he walked to the St. Rupert, three blocks away. The clerk at the desk, who transmitted Charlie's name and the information that his business was of a personal nature to the *comte*, told him that the titled guest would see him.

Charlie O'Neill regarded with instant dislike the slender, foreign-looking man to whose presence he was conducted.

"I am a friend of Mademoiselle Lavoir," Charlie introduced himself. "She has asked me to give you this."

He drew the girl's note from his pocket and held it out to the other. The man's dark face lighted up as he took the envelope from Charlie's hand.

But a swift change took place in his manner as he read the lines inside. His jaw dropped, and an exclamation of dismay escaped him.

"Here is your ring."

Charlie placed it in his hand. Then he stood waiting to see what the Comte de Brissac would do next. Bringing up his hands, with the note in one and the ring in the other, to his head, he rocked it from side to side as he fell to pacing the floor.

He talked excitedly, more to himself than to Charlie—for the moment he seemed to have forgotten the latter's presence.

"I see it all! Some one has been carrying tales to her. Lies, all lies! I can explain everything, in time. In a week, or two, at the most. But she *must* believe in me till then! She cannot break off her betrothal to me in this way! Ah, *monsieur!*" He stopped before Charlie with his hands appealingly outstretched. "Will you do that for me which will place me in your debt to my dying day?"

"And that is—?"

"One little favor. Only one. I would do as much for you, if our positions were reversed. See—I go upon my knees to beg this of you!"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Take the ring back to her. With a note which I will write, begging her to believe in me just a little longer, and not break our engagement—which will break my heart as well."

"All right," Charlie agreed laconically. "Write your note."

The *comte* stepped into the next room to do so. He was gone less than five minutes, to return with a sealed envelope that bore the hotel's crest in its upper left-hand corner which he turned over with the ring to Charlie, who freed his hand—with difficulty—from the other's gratefully wringing clutch, and departed.

Outside in the corridor, the young man lifted the still-moist flap of the envelope in turn and drew out and read the note inside.

He moved on slowly toward the elevators, when he had carefully sealed the communication back into the envelope. It implored the girl in ardent terms to reconsider her decision to break off their engagement—that, and nothing more.

Again Charlie took the ring out and looked it over. He returned it to his pocket, satisfied that it was the same one. He had noticed a tiny scratch on the inside of the platinum circlet he had taken from the girl to the man in that hotel. The same scratch was on this one. And that seemed to be proof enough that he had not substituted another for it in the next room.

"But what the deuce *is* this game, then?" Charlie O'Neill muttered to himself.

He reached the boarding-house a half-hour later, and sent a servant to the room of Mlle. Lavoir to request her to join him in the parlor.

"The *comte* says that you have misjudged him," he informed the girl, when she promptly put in an appearance in answer to his summons. "He refuses to take back the ring. Which he begs you to wear again, I believe, in this note."

He handed over the letter and with it the engagement-ring.

Mlle. Lavoir crushed the letter in her hand after she had skimmed through it.

"No!" she declared vehemently. "I am done with him, I tell you. I have told him so, too—but still he thinks he can go on deceiving me, *hein?* Well, I will write a note to him this time that he cannot mis-

understand. He shall know that I loathe and despise him now, as much as I once loved him!"

"You want me to take the ring back to him again?" Charlie asked.

"If you do not mind, *monsieur?*" with a pleasing glance from those dark, eloquent eyes of hers. "And if you will wait but two minutes while I run up-stairs to write the note?"

Charlie sat down to wait, his lips grimly shut. It was nearer ten, than two minutes before she reappeared, to present him with the ring and a second sealed envelope, which he noted was thicker than the first.

But, though he read the note he abstracted from it as he had the others, no less than six times in the elevated train on which he rode down-town to the St. Rupert, it left him as thoroughly mystified as ever to see the game by which he felt he was being "worked"—either by the girl or the "Comte de Brissac," he could not tell which.

"Ah, no, no!" wailed the Frenchman, when he had taken the ring and read the epistle Charlie handed him with it. "She is heartless—not to believe, to trust in me. But I cannot bear to think that of her. I will not, until she has rejected one more plea which I will make to her not to cast me off, because she has listened to the lying stories that have been borne to her about me. You will take the ring and another letter back to her, *monsieur?*—then I go to write it at once!"

Charlie waited once more while the *comte* withdrew into the next room.

"If she does not yield this time, and keep the ring," the dark-skinned man informed him when he placed the solitaire and the note to accompany it in Charlie's hands, five minutes later, "I shall take my life—that can mean nothing to me without her love!"

Charlie started down Fifth Avenue. He stopped, and looked over his shoulder, as he heard his name called. In the doorway of the jewelry establishment of Cole, Loomis & Wade, which he had just passed unnoticed, his friend, the junior partner, stood beckoning to him.

"That ring you showed me about an hour ago!" the jeweler said in an excited tone, when they were alone in the private office. "Do you happen to have it with you still?"

"Why, yes," said Charlie, reaching into his vest pocket. "It just happens that I do."

"No, no!" The other handed back the ring he gave him, after a single glance at it, with an impatient headshake. "I mean the one you asked me to examine before—the one I told you was worth in the neighborhood of four thousand dollars."

"That's it," Charlie insisted.

"This? It's not worth four cents."

"But you said it was a beautiful stone—"

"So it was. This is a beautiful imitation of it. It's glass—nothing else. Now, I'll tell you what happened about a half-hour after you left here. I got a notification from the people you work for. We're one of the clients of the Sterling Detective Agency, you know. We retain them at a fixed annual charge, along with a lot of other big jewelry houses in the city, to protect us against thefts and swindles of all sorts, and they're supposed to send us out a warning whenever they get wind that anything of the kind is about to be attempted. They wrote us this letter, advising us to be careful not to buy three perfect, blue-white diamonds that might be offered us any day at a bargain price.

"The stones were stolen from the collection of a titled old family abroad. They were known as the Three Tears of the Madonna, all three of them being exactly alike as to size and cut. Their detailed description was cabled over to your firm by the police on the other side, who believed the thieves came here to dispose of their haul. I had no more than read through the end of the description of those diamonds than I was almost positive the stone you had shown me was one of them. I wanted to examine it again—"

Charlie O'Neill sprang to his feet.

"I've got it!" he cried. "They're the two crooks from abroad. The girl must have found out she was being watched. Not by me—she didn't suspect that or she wouldn't have picked me out for the catspaw by whom she was to pass those gems out of her possession and into that of her pal without detection. That was why she began trying to make me daffy about her, from the moment we met, so I'd be willing to do her any favor she asked. Like this one of taking back the engagement-ring to the man she was done with.

"It had one of those Three Tears of the Madonna in it, the first time. He took it out of the setting, when he went into the next room, and put back one of the imitations he had ready. Then she took that

glass duplicate out up-stairs, when I brought it back to her, and put in another of the Tears. Which, like the ivory-headed boob that I've been all along, I trotted down to him.

"He was sending me back with this piece of glass to get the third, and last, of the genuine diamonds. Which would have wound up their game. But maybe I've got on to it in time to get them."

Charlie spun round on his heel and bolted out. Hurrying back to the St. Rupert, he drew the house detective to one side and breathlessly enlisted his help.

They swiftly ascended to the Comte de Brissac's suite, and knocked on the door. As the rogue beheld Charlie confronting him on the threshold, with the plain clothes man standing behind him, he dropped back with a gasp of apprehension, darting one hand toward his breast pocket.

But he wasn't quick enough. Charlie wrenched his hand forth, and something dropped out on the floor at his feet. It was a plush-covered box, and in it were two of the Three Tears of the Madonna.

"Don't let him use the telephone, no matter what excuse he makes to do so," Charlie instructed the house detective, as he left the dejected thief in his charge. "He'd call up his female accomplice to tip her off to duck."

But when he reached that brown stone boarding-house on the upper West Side, Charlie found that he had been forestalled. Mlle. Lavoir was already the prisoner of two other operatives of the private detective agency, who had been ordered by its manager to take her into custody and search her for the diamonds she was suspected of having in her possession.

"But we've only found one," his brother-sleuths informed Charlie. "She must have got rid of the other two somehow, without your spotting it. Which is likely to earn you a hot call-down from the chief, when he hears of it."

"A call-down?" repeated Charlie O'Neill, with elaborate indifference. "Oh, I guess not. I haven't been asleep on this job. Not for one minute. If it hadn't been for me, the Sterling Detective Agency would have fallen short of landing all three of those stones. Whereas, with the one you've found on this lady, and the two I just took away from her partner, we've got all three. I rather think when the boss hears that, I won't come in for any call-down, but a boost—in my salary!"

And, as it turned out, he was right.

# His Friend Harris

by Joseph Ivers Lawrence

I.

"AND that," said Mr. Strothers, his voice tense and throaty with honest emotion, "is all I can tell you of the bravest man I ever knew."

His veranda audience of a dozen people was awed into a silence which was more complimentary than applause. Cigars and cigarettes glowed here and there like fireflies in the darkness of the Bermuda evening; a man let go a cough that he had choked back for five minutes; another took a furtive sip from a glass of swizzle that he

had not touched during all the time that a lump of ice had been melting away in it.

Strothers could tell a good story, and he never lacked an attentive gallery. He had lived largely and had done many things, and his lightest utterances sounded that pure note of veracity which is never challenged among men.

As the people emerged slowly from the spell of the narrative and slipped and rustled back to casual animation, a young man in a corner leaned close to his chair-neighbor and whispered jocularly:

"What odds, old man, that Dr. Everett hasn't a story up his sleeve to cap that one?"

The other chuckled softly.

"I'm not as reckless a sportsman as that," he replied. "I'm wondering what keeps the doctor quiet so long!"

Just then the dreaded anticlimax burst upon them.

"The bravest man *I* ever knew!" exclaimed Dr. Everett, in the ringing tone of a herald entering the lists, "was my friend Harris!"

A murmur, compounded of amusement and vexation, greeted the announcement. One or two of the younger people still took Dr. Everett seriously, and thrilled agreeably at his spirited, boldly flung tales of travel and adventure in romantic, out-of-the-way places; but those who knew him and the world better, yawned over his wildest sagas, and nodded during his most stunning periods.

The doctor waited for some response, some invitation to proceed, but, failing such encouragement, went on without it, unabashed.

"It was—let's see!—four years ago—last month," he drawled, regarding the end of his cigar reflectively and stretching himself into the easy, half-reclining posture of the practised raconteur.

"Oh, yes; you were in Afghanistan—or was it the Caucasus?—at that time!" broke in young Burke, with suspicious interest.

"Wrong, my boy!" exclaimed the doctor, with perfect good humor. "You can hardly expect to remember dates, you know. I was in a place which, I may say frankly, I have little desire ever to be in again. It was in one of those strangely beautiful, strangely terrible regions in the upper reaches of the Amazon where few white men have ventured to set foot. I was with Humphrey's expedition—for the Philadelphia Academy of Sciences—taken on as a medic', you know, to go along and dish out quinin and the like when fever began to get into the bones."

"M-m! The Amazon—that's in darkest Africa, isn't it?" inquired Burke. "My geography's all in my feet."

The doctor expressed pained surprise, but launched forth with scientific fervor upon a correction of the error.

"Don't delay your story, Doc," interrupted Mr. Hapgood; "Burke's trying to stall you, and we — we want to get the story."

"Very well," said the doctor, "we'll get to the story then. My friend Harris—I am proud to call him that—was attached to the expedition as a geologist. He was about two-and-twenty, I believe, and a fine, clean-cut, upstanding chap; you wouldn't meet the like of him in ten years' wanderings!"

At this point one of the men discovered with consternation that it was nine o'clock, and he had an appointment to keep with some friends who were just in on that day's steamer. Mrs. Truxton, the hostess, left the veranda with the man to guide him to the outer door, and when she returned, "My Friend Harris" had reached something of the physical stature of the Colossus of Rhodes, although three more of the guests had taken leave.

"Now, picture for yourselves," the doctor was saying with ascending animation, "a situation in which a man has his avowed enemy virtually at his disposal, in a remote place, beyond the law even of—I almost said 'The Supreme Arbiter.' My friend Harris had a stepbrother with the expedition; a man slightly older than himself, who had craftily done him out of a considerable inheritance, and made him the victim of family intrigues which would have embittered a less radiant nature to a sinister degree.

"To make my story brief," continued the doctor—and ignored certain audible sighs of gratification from the concealing darkness—"this stepbrother tactlessly involved our expedition in a skirmish war with a savage Indian tribe in the deep jungle region. He, with a small scouting detachment, was cut off from the main party, and would have been butchered but for the timely arrival of my friend with reinforcements.

"While the savages were still menacing and harassing us with their deadly, poison-tipped arrows and spears, the stepbrother wandered insanely from our fortified camp and lost his way in the jungle. Night came upon us and he did not return. For myself —and I profess to be a Christian—I fear that I should have said, 'Good riddance.' But it was not so with my friend Harris; he was exhausted after days of marching and fighting, but he was deaf to our efforts to dissuade him from such a foolhardy act, and plunged heroically into the hostile jungle to the rescue of the man who had wrought so much harm for him in the past.

"He came back ten hours later, after we had quite given him up, carrying his stepbrother on his back. Both of them were wounded, and of the two my friend Harris was the less able to bear the burden.

"It was my privilege — my honor, I should say—to save his life by an immediate surgical operation of the greatest delicacy. My friend's life hung, as it were, on the blade of my knife; the slightest slip would have ended it. Well, I can't prate of my own achievements; he wears the scar now, on his neck and chest, a grim souvenir of his most gallant exploit. His enemy's life was preserved at the risk of his own, and I often wonder if that stepbrother ever really thanked him for it."

Dr. Everett sighed and bowed his head solemnly as he finished the recital. His cigar had gone out, and he sighed again profoundly as he straightened up and lighted it.

"It was a great privilege to know my friend Harris," he murmured, as though to himself.

"Well, that was a pretty fair story, doc," exclaimed Hapgood breezily; "only that mutt of a stepbrother ought to have got his at the end. You simply wouldn't do, doc, for magazine fiction!"

The doctor made no retort; he smiled with the patient sadness of one who has learned to tolerate the inanities of light-minded triflers.

At least one auditor, however, had listened to the story with breathless interest. Rita Truxton, daughter of the hostess, nineteen and pretty, leaned forward intently, elbows on knees, chin on palms.

"And where is your friend now, Dr. Everett?" she gasped.

The doctor looked naively gratified at this evidence of actual attention and confidence.

"Who knows?" he exclaimed huskily. "I haven't seen him since we left South America. These adventurous chaps never stop, you know. He may be in the Antarctic; he may be in wild Asia! Who knows?"

"Even on Brightest Broadway, or in the wind-swept Bronx! Who knows?" echoed young Burke. "Where—oh, where are the roses of yesteryear?"

The doctor cast a look of philosophical disdain at the scoffer, and said nothing.

"You men who never do anything great are always ready to poke fun at real heroes," said Rita severely. "Dr. Everett here—why, just think! He has been in battles and shipwrecks and earthquakes and volcano eruptions and mutinies and—and—oh, everything worth while, and he just acts like an ordinary man. He never tells anything about himself, or the brave, splendid things he has done; but he—"

She was interrupted by an offensive chuckle from young Burke.

"Come on! Give us one of your rip-tearing personal experiences, doc," Hapgood proposed gleefully.

"These chaps will have their little jokes, Miss Rita," said the doctor with admirable calmness. "Even so, I would be glad to tell you of a little affair I was mixed up in during a military campaign in Macedonia about eight years ago."

Mrs. Truxton, suave and tactful, affected not to have heard the last speech, and spoke up casually from her end of the veranda.

"Rita, child," she exclaimed musically, "you mustn't expect those nice jolly men to entertain you all the evening and give us unfortunate older ones no chance at all. It's quite time that young buds were in bed, keeping their rosy cheeks in color; and you have promised to join the Ardsleighs at the golf-club after a very early breakfast in the morning."

Rita, who was trained in the tactics of her able mother's social campaigns, never stopped to reason why, but always obeyed orders to the letter.

"I'm such a dutiful child," she said dryly, as she got up, "I'll have to go in now, you see. But I do want to hear about that adventure in Macedonia, Dr. Everett. You'll tell me all about it next time you're here, won't you? I shall never forget

about that wonderful, gallant Mr. Harris as long as I live. I wish I could know such men as that!"

"I," said young Burke, getting up as the other men rose, "am going out to swim in the outer harbor. If I have the luck to meet a twelve-foot shark, I'll tell you about it to-morrow, should I survive."

"If Bermuda wasn't so well nailed down by the British government," muttered Hapgood, "I declare I'd start a revolution here to-night before I slept."

Rita sniffed contemptuously.

"That's quite like you," she declared. "There's always a great big 'if' in the way! Dr. Everett's Mr. Harris wouldn't mind what was nailed down if he thought a revolution was needed; he'd go right after the British government."

"All right," returned Hapgood; "that settles it. On my way back to the hotel I'll stop at the Residence and pull the governor's nose, and tell him I defy the king and the whole blooming British Empire."

"On the contrary, Mr. Hapgood," said Rita scathingly, "you will call a cab to take you comfortably to your hotel; you'll ask for an extra blanket for your bed on account of the chilliness of the evening, and you'll tell the night-clerk that you don't care to breakfast until after ten A.M."

"Don't spoil good sleep by dreaming too much of adventures, Miss Rita," remarked Strothers gently. "As a matter of fact, soldiers of fortune are not often very comfortable persons to have around in polite society. I'm not big enough to call myself a real adventurer; but I've spent twenty years knocking about in quest of the rainbow's end, and here I am, with nothing to show for it."

"That's right," agreed Dr. Everett heavily; "we're a peculiar lot; here to-day and there to-morrow. But it's our written fate, I suppose; it's in the blood. I'm getting on now, and I rather incline to the quiet life; but give me so much as a sniff of brimstone and I'd have out my old camp-kit and be off to the wars again."

"Somebody lend me a couple of matches," whispered young Burke; "don't let a chance like that go by!"

Rita said good night and left the veranda, and a little later the guests drifted away one by one.

"Thank you, most tactful of hostesses," whispered Hapgood, as he took leave of Mrs. Truxton, "for saving us all from another—er—story."

The lady smiled and made a wry face.

"It was largely self-defense on my part," she replied. "I didn't see how I could sit through another one. Poor Dr. Everett! He's a good fellow, really, and he and my husband were great friends; but he's a bit trying, isn't he?"

## II.

"WHATEVER brought you out of bed at eight in the morning, mother dear!" cried Rita Truxton as her mother, in a youthful and becoming negligée, entered her room at the heels of the maid who brought in the breakfast tray.

"I can't trust vital matters to you or to subordinates," was the reply. "I want to see that you are dressed to please Mrs. Ardsleigh and her set, and I want to be sure that you get started in time. I fancy that Mrs. Ardsleigh makes a fad of these unearthly hours."

The girl glanced at the clock and contrived a little grimace.

"You're such an independent minx, Rita!" the mother went on. "You don't seem to understand that an invitation to play golf with the Ardsleighs is in the same class with a royal command to appear at court. I dare say you will have a ghastly, stupid time—she's a bore, you know, and the girls are even worse—but if they like you, it will amount to a social achievement for us.

"You can be seen with them occasionally, perhaps, in New York, and it's possible that you'll be invited to their place at Greenwich. It will be something of an asset, my dear. Even on the dark veranda last night I could feel the positive consternation all round me when I mentioned that you were to play golf with the Ardsleighs to-day."

Rita yawned drowsily behind her cup of chocolate.

"I'm rather fond of golf, after a fashion," she murmured; "I like it far better than I could dream of liking the Ardsleighs; but you must know, mother, that I wouldn't be likely to get up at this ungodly hour for any game ever invented, or to meet *people!* I am doing it all for you, dear mama. Even now that I'm up, I'd back out of the party for two cents."

"Not for two million cents!" cried Mrs. Truxton in momentary panic. "You talk

like one bereft of her senses. This morning may be epoch-making in your career. I can scarcely think of anything quite as terrible as your not going. I almost fear that I'd be heartless enough to make you go if you were positively ill. What did we take a house in Bermuda for, anyway?"

"Because we wouldn't be noticed at Palm Beach, or Hot Springs, or Coronado, or any of those places," chanted Rita, like one who recited a lesson well learned, "and in a remote place, socially less important, one is likely to be taken up by the right people who happen to be stopping there."

Mrs. Truxton scowled at the note of sarcasm, but nodded.

"I hardly dared hope to find any one like the Ardsleighs here," she said solemnly, "and I regard this chance as nothing short of miraculous. I can't think of anything that would persuade me to keep you from driving to the links with those people and lunching with them. It's stupendous!"

A maid came to the door of the room.

"Beg pardon, Mrs. Truxton," she said, "but there's a steam-yacht just come into the harbor—a big one, ma'am—and you said I was to let you know when there was anything like that."

"That's right," allowed Mrs. Truxton. "I'll come down to the veranda presently. Have the glasses ready for me. And tell Tompkins to get the code-book from the library and see if he can make out a private pennant on the yacht.

The maid hurried away, and Mrs. Truxton tarried to give some directions for Rita's toilet for the momentous morning. As she started at last to leave the room the maid came again, pleasantly excited.

"Please, Mrs. Truxton," she announced, "Tompkins says the yacht is the Veronica, an' there's a white flag on it with six blue stars an' a anchor, an'—an' the book says that's Mrs. Verron's pennant."

Mrs. Truxton gasped.

"Are you sure?" she gasped. "Was Tompkins positive?"

"Is it really Aunt Sophronia's yacht?" exclaimed Rita.

"I will come down at once," said Mrs. Truxton, collecting herself. "Tell Tompkins to order the carriage quickly for Miss Rita."

She turned to her daughter excitedly.

"Hurry, Rita!" she ordered. "Put on a pretty light dress and your big sun hat, and drive down to the landing-stage as fast as you can. I can't get ready in time to go with you, but you must meet her when she comes ashore and bring her here for breakfast."

"Wha — what about the Ardsleighs?" gasped the girl.

"I'll send Tompkins to them with a note of apology," explained the mother calmly, "Now, hurry!"

Rita smiled archly.

"But you said that nothing in the world should prevent my going with them, mama," she protested mischievously.

"I didn't regard your aunt as a possible contingency," was the cold reply. "What she is doing down here I can't imagine; but our whole duty is to her, now that she's here. The Ardsleighs are—an opportunity; your Aunt Sophronia's money is a certainty, if you study her whims and don't do anything to cross her. Position is everything, Rita, but money is—a little more than everything, and it takes precedence."

Fifteen minutes later the barkantine-rigged steam-yacht Veronica dropped anchor in Hamilton harbor and saluted the yacht club with its small cannon. Presently a launch put out and made for the shore, and at the same time the Truxtons' carriage dashed reckless over a land course toward the same destination.

Mrs. Verron, looking fifty-five and acting thirty-five, stepped ashore in a smart blue yachting costume of mannish cut, and permitted her rosy and obviously flustered niece to salute her formally upon the cheek. The yachtswoman was attended by a slim and nonchalant young cavalier in nautical habiliments, who smoked a cigarette and stared at Rita with frank approval.

"My niece, Miss Truxton," murmured Mrs. Verron perfunctorily. "Rita, this man is Mr. Harry Dorrilton, who was good enough to endure three days of living death by seasickness for the sake of being my guest. He's still a bit green around the gills and wabbly on his feet, but he's a good chap—you'll like him."

"How d'you do?" exclaimed the man effusively, taking Rita's graciously offered hand. "Mrs. Verron does lay it on a bit thick, doesn't she? But I was really beastly ill, at that! It's worse than crossing the English Channel, you know."

"Mother said that you mustn't dream of staying aboard the Veronica, Aunt So-

phronia," said Rita. "You must come right up to the house for breakfast, and have your luggage sent up directly. This is all so unexpected, you know. Mother is delighted."

"Yes, she would be," returned Mrs. Verron cryptically. "All right, we'll go up for breakfast. We've had one already, but I can always eat. Poor Mr. Dorrilton has lost his appetite, but he'll have a drink, I'm sure. If I like your house and your cook, maybe I'll send back for my luggage. You know, I never take any chances, Rita; it doesn't pay at my time of life. I never go anywhere out of reach of the Veronica. If the houses or the hotels don't suit me, I have my own hotel floating somewhere near by. It's the only system, believe me!"

"By Jove, that's ghastly!" Mr. Dorrilton cried suddenly, patting the various pockets of his suit frantically with both hands. "I've left my cigarettes aboard the yacht."

"Never mind; we have plenty for you at the house," said Rita, a bit wearily.

"Yes, I know—I dare say you have," faltered the man anxiously, "but I have mine blended for me by a Persian fellow in New York; I never smoke any others."

Mrs. Verron hailed the sailor in her launch.

"Go back and get Mr. Dorrilton's cigarettes out of his stateroom," she ordered. "Fetch them here, and I'll send Mrs. Truxton's coachman back for them."

"It will take fully half an hour," warned Rita, with a suspicious twinkle in her eye. "Can you get along, Mr. Dorrilton?"

"If your mother has the right kind of Scotch for him," said Mrs. Verron, "he'll manage to muddle through. Won't you, Harry?"

"Oh, really, I'm not altogether a silly ass!" protested Dorrilton, politely indignant.

"No, really, he's not!" agreed the yachtswoman heartily, and without further parley the three of them got into the carriage and started for the house.

## III.

"Harry Dorrilton is vastly taken with you, Rita," Mrs. Verron confided to her niece that evening, just after dinner. "He says you're 'quite all right,' and that's rather an extravagant expression for him."

The girl smiled enigmatically.

"Just think, if he hadn't liked me at all!" she exclaimed.

Mrs. Verron frowned, catching a suspicious note of banter.

"Well, it's a pretty serious thing for a girl not to have men like her," she remarked. "Harry's about as good as they run, Rita; you'll like him when you know him better. I brought him down here for you, and I counted on your liking him."

The girl flushed vividly and parted her lips to speak, but closed them again and pondered. Dorrilton was the third man that her aunt had "brought" to her, and on the occasion of her spirited rejection of the second candidate, Mrs. Verron had intimated pointedly that there might be one more, but that the third would be the last.

All her life, passed in a home where precariously well-to-do poverty was the prevailing condition, Rita had been trained to live up to her Aunt Sophronia, as the potential heiress to the considerable hoard accumulated by the late Colonel Verron. Her aunt had not directly dominated her in the past to any irksome extent, for they saw comparatively little of each other; but in all of the family problems and adjustments the name of Aunt Sophronia was a symbol of fate and family law.

Some time, according to the natural order, Aunt Sophronia would quit the world; and then, if Rita Truxton had been a dutiful and satisfactory niece, she would have for her own, it was devoutly believed, the Verron fortune, the Verron mansion, the Verron country-seat, the Verron yacht—everything that was Verron—down to the Verron table linen and teacups.

Rita had not found it oppressive, so far, to be a dutiful niece, for her aunt's demands had been few and not heavily imposed; but Mrs. Verron was a lady of infinite variety, and was known to act, in crises, intensively.

"You're nineteen," the yachtswoman went on in a businesslike tone, "and it's best that you should be settled for life in a satisfactory way before you fall in love with some impossible person and make trouble for us all. Harry Dorrilton has forty thousand a year — which is good enough — and his social position is good enough, too. I have had my eye on him for some time, and he's a pretty decent sort. There's nothing vicious about him,

and he hasn't personality enough to make any one uncomfortable. I've told him frankly what I intend to do for you—that's the fair way to go about things, I think—and he thinks you are — well, 'quite all right,' as I told you. So, you see, it's all as good as settled."

"I—I hardly know what the man looks like yet, Aunt Sophronia," faltered the girl in a mild state of panic. "He hasn't been in the house but a few hours. Of course, I can't say much about him until I get to know him a little, can I?"

Mrs. Verron sniffed scornfully.

"It takes about twenty years to get to know a man," she asserted. "I felt scarcely acquainted with the colonel when he died, and we had been married over twenty years. You can feel fairly safe, my dear, in taking up any man that I approve of."

Rita was taken off her feet; her usual wit and presence of mind deserted her in this extremity.

"This is so terribly unexpected!" she exclaimed. "I can hardly realize what you have been saying, Aunt Sophronia. Of course, I must tell mother all about it, and talk it over with her."

"That has all been attended to," replied Mrs. Verron complacently. "I talked with your mother just before dinner, and she agrees with me entirely, as usual. She will announce the engagement as soon as you get back to New York. She's delighted, my dear—delighted! Now I'll see Harry alone, and tell him it's all fixed; that will save you both a deal of embarrassment and silliness."

Rita grew pale, and her breath almost left her.

"Aunt Sophronia," she gasped, "you—you can't do that! Why, it—it's horrible to rush into such a thing this way! You haven't given me five minutes to think. Surely it's something that I should be allowed to give a little reflection to!"

Her aunt looked bored, but smiled and shrugged her shoulders.

"Conventionality and sentiment are the thieves of time," she sighed. "I suppose it is proper—in a Jane Austen sense—for you to withdraw and take counsel of your soul. All right, I won't tell Harry he's engaged until to-morrow. Don't lose any sleep about it, though; sleep is more important than love or marriage, or any other trifles of the sort."

They heard the soft beat of Dorrilton's pump-shod feet coming through the hall, and Rita uttered a little cry and fled through a side door to take temporary refuge in the darkness of the veranda.

She had complained of not seeing enough of the suitor for her hand to form an opinion of his eligibility, but now a mere glimpse of him was the last thing in the world that she desired. Huddled in a Hong-Kong chair at the darkest corner of the veranda, she reviewed the hours since the advent of the man.

His voice rang in her ears, and the ringing was not musical; she pictured his face, his figure, and his bearing from memories of the breakfast-room and the dinner-table, and she ended her contemplation with a sniff and a contemptuous grimace.

He had left his own cigarettes—he could smoke no others—on the yacht, and it had taken a sailor and a coachman, with horse and boat, to fetch them for him. Dr. Everett's Mr. Harris had gone alone into a jungle infested with hostile savages to bring back a man whom he didn't like!

"Why is the whole world—wherever we go—littered with the Dorrilton kind of person?" Rita asked the moth that was hovering over the honeysuckles. "And why do we hear of the wonderful Harris people, or read about them, but never see them?" she added wistfully.

The moth, instead of answering, flew away as Dr. Everett came through the garden and on to the veranda. He was staying for a month at the Hotel Hamilton, and he dropped in at the Truxtons' of an evening with the easy familiarity of an old friend of the family.

Rita had doubts of how her voice might sound after the recent ordeal, and she huddled closer in the chair and kept quiet.

The doctor flashed a bright little pocket lighter and applied it to his cigar, and the glow penetrated to the hiding place.

"Well, well, Miss Rita, this is jolly!" exclaimed the veteran of many wars and sundry bickerings in the waste places of the earth. "All alone in your bower, and still as a mouse! Wandering in lands of fancy and romance, I dare say?"

Rita steeled her nerves and forced as natural a voice as she could manage.

"I have to get all my romance and adventure from imagination and books, Dr. Everett," she replied. "You wonderful men who have been everywhere except fairyland—"

"Fairyland!" exclaimed the doctor, without excusing the interruption. "The word brings a picture before me; I was once in a place so very like fairyland that I— Well, it was in the Marquesas, in the South Seas. I was cruising with a rascally, piratical captain of a trading schooner, and we were—"

Rita was in an impatient mood, and she interrupted him in turn.

"Don't forget that you haven't told me that story of the Macedonian campaign yet," she said.

The doctor's memory was unreliable.

"Macedonian campaign?" he echoed, a little nervously. "Let me see, now; what did I tell you about that, Miss Rita?"

"Oh, really, you can't have forgotten it so quickly!" she protested. "It was only last night, you know. Sometimes I think you great men almost affect absent-mindedness as a characteristic of genius. You'll be forgetting that Mr. Harris was the bravest man you ever knew."

"My friend Harris!" cried the doctor, with fond delight, and seemed instantly to dismiss the perplexing Macedonian incident from his mind. "Ah, but there's little danger of my ever forgetting that splendid chap, bless 'im!"

"Was he handsome?" asked Rita impulsively. "Oh, yes; I believe you said he was."

"Harris would delight the eye of any painter or sculptor," answered the adventurer.

"Dark or light?" demanded the girl.

"Dark," was the answer, given with no shade of hesitation; "a romantic type—dashing, but ingenuous; clear-eyed and clear-headed—an American prince!"

"Don't you ever hear from him?" inquired the girl. "Where is he now?"

"Who knows?" sighed the doctor.

"Oh, yes; that's what you said last night," she remarked coldly.

A light flashed up in the hall back of the veranda, and Mrs. Truxton stood in the doorway.

"I thought I heard voices out here," she said casually; "and here you are, doctor, entertaining my little girl. Do come into the house; it's rather chilly to-night. Mrs. Verron—my sister, you know—came in on her yacht this morning, and Mr. Dorrilton, from New York, is our guest, also. You've met my sister, and she'll be charmed to see you again."

The doctor threw away his cigar and followed the lady into the house, while Rita moved politely but reluctantly after them. The doctor greeted the imperious and imposing yachtswoman and was introduced to Mr. Dorrilton, and Rita sank forlornly into a chair just out of the circle.

"You did well to come to Bermuda in the season, Mr. Dorrilton," said the doctor, with his habitual cordiality. "You've been here before? No? Then you have a thousand pleasures in store for you. Did you have good weather on the way down?"

Mr. Dorrilton's momentary animation and good humor gave way to a hang-dog air of dejection and a sickly pallor.

"Really," he answered painfully, "you will have to ask Mrs. Verron about the actual weather; I didn't notice it; but I fancy it was the beastliest weather in the history of navigation. I am trying to forget that I have to go back through the same disgusting ocean. I was seriously ill, Dr. Everett; beastly ill!"

The doctor laughed with the amusement which is mysteriously engendered in all mortals by the mere mention of seasickness.

"It *is* beastly, isn't it?" he said, "for one who is not a natural sailor like myself. But you'll be surprised, no doubt, Mr. Dorrilton, when I tell you that I owed my life on one occasion to a case of seasickness. I didn't have it myself, understand, but a man who would undoubtedly have taken my life became too ill to think about it at the critical moment.

"We were knocking about the Indian Ocean," he went on rapidly, defying interruptions; "six of us in a crazy native sailing craft, and—"

"If you don't mind, doctor," interrupted Mrs. Truxton, "we were about to have some liqueurs brought in. You'll have Scotch and soda, I think?"

The doctor signified assent, and moved forward in his chair to resume the narrative with increased spirit.

"I haven't seen you, doctor, since we were all at Narragansett that summer," Mrs. Verron broke in ruthlessly. "Colonel Verron was alive then, and we put in there with our yacht, and—"

"I remember it well, dear lady," said the doctor gallantly, "and it was directly after that that I went to the Orient. As I was saying, we were knocking about in a crazy sort of a skiff—"

"This was at Narragansett?" queried Mrs. Verron.

"No, no!" answered the narrator, concealing his irritation. "It was in the Indian Ocean, and I was—"

"Pardon me again, doctor," said Mrs. Truxton, "but your cigar is out, and you must let me have Tompkins bring in some fresh ones. Mr. Dorrilton has his own cigarettes and will smoke no others, so you shall tell Tompkins just what sort of cigars to bring in. Men enjoy their smoking so whole-heartedly that I think a hostess should give intelligent attention to it."

"Mr. Hapgood!" announced Tompkins from the doorway.

"Ah, one of our agreeable neighbors, Sophronia," murmured Mrs. Truxton; "you'll like him, I think."

Dr. Everett's brows knitted at the announcement, for he had experienced the quality of the agreeable neighbor's humor.

"Oh, well," he said lightly, "Hapgood has heard my story, I think, so I'll save it for another time. Remind me of it, Mr. Dorrilton."

"Story!" cried Hapgood, bursting buoyantly into the room. "Did I hear some one say 'story'? It can't be that Dr. Everett has at last been prevailed on to recount some of the thrilling incidents of his travels in the odd corners of the world! By Jove, if that's it, I'm just in time for a tidbit of excitement!"

"Dr. Everett," said Dorrilton, as perfunctory introductions were made, "was about to tell us of an extraordinary adventure of his in the Indian Ocean."

"But the poor doctor was unfortunately interrupted so many times," put in Mrs. Truxton hurriedly, "that I fear he quite lost patience. He has promised to tell us of the experience some other time."

"A pleasure deferred," remarked Hapgood, "affords one at least the joys of anticipation."

The doctor smiled and affected to take the barbed shafts of rude humor gracefully, but Rita Truxton could see that he was touched on the raw.

The banter and the chatter grated on her harrowed nerves, and she slipped quietly out of her chair and escaped from the room. In the small library, on the other side of the hall, she sat down and sighed disconsolately. She had never perceived before that almost every one openly mocked the doctor and his tales of stirring adventure. Mr. Strothers, on the other hand, told similar tales, and was always listened to with attention and serious approval.

Was Dr. Everett, then, nothing more than a garrulous, bombastic faker—a modern Tartarin of Tarascon? Was "my friend Harris" nothing but a figment of the loquacious doctor's practised imagination?

A sob rose in Rita's throat. Every one around her was false and altogether horrible. Mr. Dorrilton, to whom she was virtually promised as a wife, was a milksop with a fine taste in cigarettes; her mother and her aunt were cold-blooded, designing harpies, exploiting her as nothing more than their stock in trade; Dr. Everett, kindly and outwardly considerate, was a liar; *Mr. Harris* was a heart-breaking myth.

Rita choked back the sob and dried her eyes. The eyes became brilliant and hard as steel. Great purpose and resolution were born out of the chaos in her mind. Lies would be as coals to Newcastle in that house, but it seemed that there was no other standard of exchange.

## IV.

THE ebullient Hapgood had gained a characteristic familiarity with the new guests to the extent of chaffing Mr. Dorrilton on his private blend of cigarette tobacco, when Dr. Everett, who had been pathetically silent for an hour, rose to go.

"Ah, but it's early, doctor," protested Mrs. Truxton. "Stay and have a bit of supper with us presently. Hark! Is that a band playing down in the town?"

Dr. Everett listened with the rest, and his eyes brightened with martial fervor.

"Why, yes, that's the military band," he said. "It must be that the governor has just come in on his yacht. He has been on a visit to Jamaica, you know. The band is out to assist in the welcome home. I'd like to stay longer, but I really must go."

"The welcome to the governor can hardly go on until the doctor arrives," chuckled Hapgood.

"You are positively rude to the poor doctor, Mr. Hapgood," chided Mrs. Truxton. "You men are frightfully personal in your humor, anyway, I think. Now, doctor, I must insist on your waiting for supper."

"Yes, I would like to have the doctor

remain for a little while," said Rita, suddenly appearing in the doorway and speaking with peculiar coldness. "I have something to say to all of you, if you don't mind."

"Why, certainly, I'll wait, if I can be of any service," responded the doctor, mystified with the rest.

"We're all waiting anxiously, dear," said Mrs. Truxton, "to hear what brings you to us in this rather dramatic manner."

Rita walked slowly to the middle of the room, stopped, and rested her hand on the table to steady herself.

"I must first explain to Dr. Everett and Mr. Hapgood," she began, "that my very wealthy aunt, Mrs. Verron, whose logical heir I am supposed to be—"

"Rita!" exclaimed Mrs. Truxton, staring at her aghast.

"Arrived this morning," continued the girl resolutely, "and brought with her Mr. Dorrilton, who has enough money and social position to make him eligible, to present him to me as my prospective husband, selected by her and approved by my mother."

"Rita!" cried Mrs. Truxton again, and sank into a chair overcome with consternation.

Mrs. Verron maintained a certain composure.

"The child is beside herself," she remarked. "You had better go to your room, Rita dear."

"I say, you know," broke in Dorrilton at the same moment, "this is rather a bit irregular and raw, I think. All this, before a couple of comparative strangers, too, you know!"

"You are the only one here who is a stranger to me," returned Rita. "Please let me go on. I intend to say all I have to say."

Hapgood and the doctor were stiffly silent and painfully embarrassed, but they were human enough to be thoroughly absorbed in the stunning revelations.

"In order to receive a considerable dowry from Mrs. Verron, and ultimately to inherit her fortune," Rita went on firmly, "I have to accept Mr. Dorrilton as my *fiancé* to-morrow morning. Failing that, I shall receive no dowry or legacy, and my ambitious mother's fondest hopes will be shattered. I thought at one time this evening that I had not spirit enough to declare my individuality, but I almost believe now that I have a soul of my own. I have decided to be true to myself.

"I did not become my mother's daughter of my own volition, and I am indebted to her for practically nothing but the extravagant tastes, false pride, and ambitions which she has trained me to, so I have resolved to follow my own course and abide by my own judgment.

"I have come here to announce that I have deceived you all; I have been schooled in the art of deception like the rest of you. I cannot be betrothed to Mr. Dorrilton. I can hardly conceive of marrying him if he were the last man on earth, but it is impossible for me to consider Mr. Dorrilton, anyway, because I am engaged to another man."

"Good Heaven!" cried Mrs. Truxton, and collapsed.

"You beastly little fool!" exclaimed Mrs. Verron, enraged at last.

"Rather a vulgar, stupid affair all round, I should say!" observed Harry Dorrilton.

"We must admit, if you'll pardon my speaking," said Dr. Everett sententiously, "that, according to American principles of liberty and equality, every young person has the indubitable right to exercise his or her freedom of natural selection."

"Natural tommyrot!" muttered Mrs. Verron savagely. "Who is the man that you've been getting entangled with, Rita?"

"I am engaged," said Rita slowly and gravely, "to Mr. Harris, who is one of Dr. Everett's dearest friends."

She turned and looked defiantly at the doctor, daring him to do his worst. If he betrayed her and branded her statement a lie, he would have to repudiate his own story and confess himself a cheap parlor mountebank.

"Lord bless my soul!" cried the doctor explosively.

"Who is the man, doctor?" moaned Mrs. Truxton. "Do you really know him, and did you know of this clandestine affair?"

"Mr. Harris," said Rita serenely, "is the bravest man that Dr. Everett ever knew."

"By Jove, I remember the name now!" cried Hapgood. "You were telling the story last night, doc, and I noticed at the time that Miss Rita was mightily excited."

The doctor eyed the girl in blank amazement and could hardly find his voice.

"Well, well—the lucky young dog!" he exclaimed at last. "And he never let me know. Where is he, Miss Rita, and where and when did you meet him, if I may ask?"

Rita was prepared.

"Our engagement has been a secret," she said coolly, "and I have betrayed a promise in revealing it to-night. I shall give no further information until I have my *fiancé's* permission to do so."

"What is he?" demanded Mrs. Truxton again.

"A geologist, a mining expert, a civil engineer," answered the doctor, almost himself again. "He is one of the rising young men in the scientific world."

"We must meet him at once," said Mrs. Truxton. "If he's at all presentable, at all possible, we must learn what we can about his family and his prospects. Rita is a selfish, self-willed girl, and I dare say she would leave us or do something outlandish if we tried to thwart her."

"She wouldn't be self-willed long if she was my daughter!" declared Mrs. Verron. "She is not too old to be disciplined. Well, I wash my hands of the affair; I'm through!"

"I can't understand why or how it has all been kept from my knowledge so long," complained the mother. "The courtship must have been sudden and brief."

"It was," said Rita.

"But you must produce the man, child!" cried the distracted woman. "It's too mysterious, too irregular! Surely, Dr. Everett, if you're his friend, you must know where he is—where he can be found!"

Once more the girl turned her challenging, defiant gaze on her involuntary accomplice.

The doctor fidgeted and looked miserable.

"I'm as much at sea as the rest of you," he protested. "I'm simply — flabbergasted!"

Tompkins, the butler, appeared at the door.

"A gentleman inquiring for Dr. Everett," he announced. "He says he was directed here from the hotel."

"You may show him in," said Mrs. Truxton abstractedly, still beside herself, and not realizing what the butler had announced or what she had directed him to do.

"Calling for me?" murmured the doctor, puzzled by the proceeding. "Then perhaps I'd better see him outside."

But the thought came too late. Tompkins reappeared and announced:

"Mr. Harris!"

There were six people present, and there were six equally sharp and genuine gasps of astonishment.

A tall, dark young man of more than ordinary good looks stepped quietly into the room. He was smartly attired in white flannels, and carried a Panama hat and a whangee walking-stick in his hand.

He bowed low to the women, and his gaze lingered for an instant upon Rita, as other men's often did.

"I hope this is not a serious intrusion," he said. "I have but a few hours in Bermuda, and I heard by chance that my old friend Dr. Everett was here."

"By the Lord Harry," yelled the doctor in a frenzy of surprise and joy, "it *is* my friend Harris!"

He threw himself upon the young man, and shook him and thumped him with his fists in an excess of excitement.

All eyes were upon the mysterious visitor, and no one seemed to notice Rita. She had reeled and staggered backward, and stood clinging to a chair for support, her eyes wild with terror.

She was trapped, beaten, utterly discredited by this miserable trick of circumstance.

"You foxy young scoundrel," cried the doctor, when he could catch his breath, "standing here and pretending to ignore that lovely girl! Your secret is out, though; you're betrayed. She told us all about it just a moment ago!"

The young man stepped back to set in order his rumpled apparel, and he looked at Dr. Everett as though the words were part of some fresh madness of the moment.

With the final cataclysm impending, Rita's fighting spirit rallied for a last stand. She felt that she must get through the staggering, ugly moment with what shred of countenance there might be for her. If she died an instant later, it would not matter.

She set her jaws, lifted her head, and faced the perplexed stranger.

"My dear," spoke up Mrs. Truxton, "is it possible that this gentleman is your *fiancé?*"

The young man blushed under his rich tan and looked from one to another in utter bewilderment.

"Don't play 'possum any longer, my boy!" cackled the doctor idiotically. "I tell you she gave it all away just before you came in! Don't be a clam!"

The young man looked at the girl with something like alarm. The place seemed to be a madhouse. He gazed at her, and her eyes held his with wild, irresistible entreaty.

She spoke suddenly in a strained, half-sobbing voice.

"I had to tell them," she said. "They wanted me to—to marry another man, you see—so I had to tell them."

Mr. Harris, as Dr. Everett had asserted on a previous occasion, was one man in a million.

Another man would have precipitated the crash at that instant with a single question, a single glance. Harris had an eye and a brain that could read a situation without profound study or a guide-book.

He saw a young girl in distress! he saw that he was in some extraordinary way a party to her distress, and he was a gallant gentleman.

"Well, then," he said with a sudden, brilliant smile, "if you had to tell them, I'm mighty glad you did so, my dear!"

With that he dropped his hat and stick, took Rita in his arms, and kissed her on the lips.

And Rita—a maidenly, demure girl by nature—held the strange man close in her arms and cried tumultuously upon his shoulder—cried as though she would never stop.

Hapgood and Dorrilton, having something of the instincts of gentlemen, retired from the room quietly.

"I think," said Dr. Everett happily, "that it's only fair, ladies, that we should leave these two young people alone for a while."

"I dare say that Mr. Harris can calm her better than I could hope to do," responded Mrs. Truxton, almost on the verge of tears herself.

The doctor stepped close to his friend.

"Comfort her, my boy," he said with clumsy kindness; "I fancy she's been through something of an ordeal. You said you had but a few hours in Bermuda; you must reconsider now!"

Harris spoke softly.

"I brought the governor over from Jamaica in my yacht," he explained. "The governor's yacht is laid up there for repairs, and I offered him my services. I am building a railroad there, and I have to return at once."

Mrs. Verron pricked up her ears and instantly struck her colors like a good sportswoman.

"You're a yachtsman, then, Mr. Harris?" she said almost amiably. "I dare say we'll get on together pretty well. You must stay long enough to get decently acquainted with Rita's family, you know."

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Harris," seconded the mother, laying a friendly hand upon his arm. "This is all terribly sudden and unexpected, but we must get to know one another."

"To be sure," agreed Harris heartily, "I shall be delighted!"

And then he and Rita were left alone.

There was an instant of tense silence; then the girl sprang away from him, her eyes blazing and her cheeks burning vividly.

He checked a threatening outburst with an admonitory finger on his lips.

"Now be calm and tell me all about it, if you care to," he said with infinite gentleness; and he took her hand deferentially and led her to a seat.

Brokenly, half hysterically, she poured out the whole story, sparing no detail, from the moment when the doctor told the story of "my friend Harris."

"And I decided at last that he invented it all," she said miserably.

"Dr. Everett never would have to invent a story," replied Harris. "He's one of the best fellows alive, and if he does talk a lot, it's always about other people and their achievements. He has medals for bravery and distinguished service, and never wears them; he has done a score of gallant things, but he never tells of them."

They talked thus for an hour, and the girl grew calm and regained some poise.

"I shall confess everything to my mother to-morrow," she said at last, "and after that—"

He checked her again.

"It is too late," he said kindly; "you must confess nothing. You say that I have been a good actor to-night— Well, I can keep up the part as long as you need me. We are deep in conspiracy, and we must follow it to the end. By our admissions

we are engaged, and engaged we must remain until we agree to break the contract. It will be my pleasure and my honor to conduct myself as your *fiancé* until you ask me to release you."

She looked at him wonderingly, and she smiled for the first time—a sweet, rueful, childish smile.

"You came to me as *Lohengrin* came to *Elsa,* didn't you?" she said whimsically.

"I'm glad if it seemed like that," he answered boyishly. "But now you must trust me better than *Elsa* trusted her knight, and do as I ask you to do. And perhaps—please don't think I am merely bold—but perhaps, before it's all over, you know, we might decide not to break the engagement."

She smiled again, timidly, and bowed her head.

# Too Good To Be True

by Neil Moran

## I.

EVELYN WALTON yawned. When alone Evelyn yawned in a way that would have astonished her society friends. For with the élite she was quite conventional. Walked just so, swung a fan gracefully, bowed at the right time and said "rawther" and "so glad to have met you" in very precise and charming tones.

For about one month she had been in the social whirl. It started when she purchased a ticket for a charity bazar at the Waldorf, where she met Dorothy Duell. And Dorothy, who was well established as a social belle, took a fancy to Evelyn and introduced her here and there.

Evelyn called her father a promoter. Whatever he promoted nobody knew. Her mother she said was dignified and strict.

But Evelyn had the looks, the voice and the "get there" manner, so naturally she was considered a young lady of good standing with a family tree of blue blood—if I may mix my metaphor—for generations.

Her yawning over, she glanced around the room with contempt.

"Ain't it the limit?" she said aloud, "living in this joint. A girl with my ambitions!"

Had she been with her society friends her remark perhaps would have been, "So unfortunate. Poor father's business reverses. And we had to let the maid go today."

Old man Walton the "promoter" entered the room.

"Are you growling again?" he demanded with the ferocity of a lion. "Haven't I enough on my brain trying to perfect my aeroplane motor without listening to your gab?"

Social etiquette had taught Evelyn to treat such outbursts with silent contempt. Dignity was so essential when dealing with a high-strung person.

"Some of your society friends should see you now," went on the old man. "The way you disrespect your poor old father, who never says a cross word to you, and who will give you a place in the world when he receives the ten million dollars for his patent."

"Oh, can it," she snapped. "I'm tired of patents and this ten-million-dollar talk. Who can I invite to this cheap flat? Other girls, my friends, have elegant homes, maids, automobiles, everything. And to think I mingle with them. I'd be ashamed for them to know how poor we are."

"But the ten million dollars," persisted the old man, getting ready to enthuse over his pet hobby. "Think of it! Steam yachts, mansions, automobiles, everything. And you, my dear, with your statuesque beauty, shall marry a duke. Forget about these empty-headed dancing men. They are nothing but social gangsters."

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," remarked Evelyn, hoping the old man would keep on with the son-in-law business and forget about the ten-million-dollar patent. "If I got hold of a rich fellow I'd marry him. Believe me, he'd never get away."

Old man Walton sighed. He had gray hair, an abundance of whiskers and wore glasses. He was a well-meaning old fellow, who had been chasing rainbows all his life, from get-rich-quick schemes in his youth to inventing aeroplane motors in his old age.

His wife came into the room. She was a mild-looking woman, very timid in everything she did and said. She came from a small town in New England, where she had sung in the church choir and taught Sunday school afterwards.

"A letter for you, Evelyn," she said, handing it over.

She then sat down, folded her hands in her lap and looked meekly at her husband. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, the time he usually started on the long discourse regarding the ten million dollar patent. She had followed the series from the beginning and was now ready for the latest edition.

Evelyn tore open the envelope, holding up two tickets.

"For the Deerfoot Club dance," she said. "To-morrow night."

The mother and father looked interested. The Deerfoot was some swell club. According to what Evelyn told them, every man there was in love with her.

"I must go," she exclaimed. "My new evening gown will cause a riot."

She had clothes. Unknown to her friends she was a hat model.

"I suppose I must go alone," she continued. "It's so terribly swell I wouldn't ask any of that crowd to call for me here."

"Why not take your father?" suggested her mother. "When he was a young man, before we were married, he was a lovely dancer."

The mother looked at the ambitious daughter as though she had put something good across.

But Evelyn shook her head.

"It would never do! Father would get wound up on his ten million dollar patent and—"

"No such thing," declared the old man emphatically. "Those club fellows would steal my ideas. Anyway, I could not go. Too much work in there."

He nodded toward the adjoining room which he had fitted up with apparatus, tool chests and various mechanical appliances. At a random guess it might have been a plumbing shop.

"Perhaps your mother would go," he suggested. "If there's to be singing she can certainly do her share."

Evelyn became exasperated.

"What are you both doing? Kidding me? Do you think it's a parlor concert? I'd like you to know it's some swell affair."

But the old man had ducked for the room where he dreamed ten million dollar ideas, and the mother suddenly departed for the kitchen. Excitement was about to break and past performances cautioned them to give the only child a wide berth.

Alone again she sighed. It was no use she thought. It was a cruel world.

She picked up a book, settled herself comfortably in a chair and started to read. And while she read the "promoter" hammered away at pipes, loosened bolts and tightened screws, while the mother cooked the supper, fully convinced that Evelyn had it on all the society belles and well known actresses in every shape, manner and form.

## II.

EVELYN was not the only one down on her luck financially. For while peace reigned for the time being in the Walton flat, a much discouraged aspiring playwright

was matching his wits against those of an office-boy in a well known theatrical manager's office.

"'Tain't no use, mister," the boy was saying; "the boss won't see you."

"But tell him it's the most wonderful play New York could get," persisted the author, who called himself James Lawrence Van Dome.

The boy shook his head.

"Have a heart, mister. I told him all that stuff."

"And what did he say?" asked Mr. Van Dome eagerly.

The boy smiled. "Said New Yorkers don't want wonderful plays. On the level, mister, you queered yourself with that noise."

The remark did not daunt Mr. Van Dome. Leisurely he opened his manuscript, adjusted his glasses on his prominent nose and proceeded to read with much feeling and emphasis the first act. For in desperation Mr. Van Dome was determined that some one of a theatrical manager's staff should listen to his masterpiece, because he had failed to get an appreciative audience in the six offices he had visited that afternoon.

And while he read, sweeping the air with dramatic gestures, inflecting his voice to a high pitch, then bringing it down to the depths of a deep barytone, the office boy played "war," shooting rubber bands at the desk clock for the enemy.

Totally unconscious of his hearer's indifference, Mr. Van Dome read on, finally finishing a scene with a wide sweep of the arm and a ring of victory in his voice.

Replacing the manuscript in its folder, he removed his glasses, carefully pocketed them and turned to the boy.

"Well," he asked, "what say you, my lad? You have heard only the start. What do you think?"

"Great," responded the boy enthusiastically. "It would be a riot in the movies."

Whereupon Mr. Van Dome in much disgust made some very uncomplimentary remarks about office-boys in general, and departed.

It was no wonder then that James Lawrence Van Dome walked the Great White Way downtrodden and discouraged.

The thought of his landlady, who conducted a theatrical boarding-house in West Forty-fifth Street, sent shivers down his spine. Mrs. Toomey had told him when he left that morning not to come back without his rent.

As he departed he had loftily tapped his manuscript, impressing upon her the fact that she would get her paltry four dollars and he would then move to the St. Regis. He also threatened to caricature her in a despicable rôle when he wrote his next play, "Too Much Toomey."

His plight was far worse than Evelyn's. She at least had a home, two tickets for a swell dance, a mother who cooked and a father bent on making ten million dollars.

But Mr. Van Dome could seem to get nothing but abuse from landladies and impudent stares from office-boys.

So as he walked he pondered, and like many before him, suicide presented itself as a last resort.

His morbid thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a thump on the back. Mr. Van Dome came to earth looking into the round, good natured face of Ira Hall.

Ira had worked on an up-State farm with him. Incidentally he had suggested some brilliant lines for the "Battle of Battles."

"Van," Ira exclaimed, "I've been hunting the town for you."

Mr. Van Dome threw back his shoulders. At least he was sought by one person.

"And how's the play?" Ira continued, not forgetting the author's promise to make him his business manager.

"Splendid," replied Mr. Van Dome. "Promising, Ira, very promising. At present it is under consideration with Manager Shady."

Mr. Van Dome felt his inside coat-pocket. The masterpiece was well concealed.

Ira put a hand on his shoulder.

"I hope you're not forgetting your promise, Van. Me for business manager. Remember?"

Mr. Van Dome shook his head.

"Indeed I do, Ira. You shall have it, but I prefer you for my personal representative."

Ira nodded.

"Just as you say, Van. It's all the same to me."

Mr. Van Dome had been observing Ira with much interest. He was wearing prosperous looking clothes.

"Er—what are you doing?" he asked.

"Working for the Deerfoot Club," replied Hall. "By the way, to-morrow night the club is giving a dance. I'll be on the

door to take tickets. Perhaps you'd care to come?"

"I presume the club has high class people," Mr. Van Dome remarked. "That is, people with money. Now that I have become a playwright, Ira, it is only discrimination on my part."

Hall smiled.

"None better, Van. The whole crowd has money. Once you're inside it's up to you to make an acquaintance. Come over at eight o'clock and walk right by me."

This then was the reason for Mr. Van Dome returning to his boarding-house after he had left Ira with the club's address written on the outside of his manuscript.

Carefully he opened the front door. He meant to steal up-stairs, secure his evening suit, the only clothes he possessed besides those he was wearing, and then quickly depart from the premises. But in the hallway he encountered the landlady.

"Well," she demanded, "have you the rent?"

"My dear Mrs. Toomey," he lied, "at last I have become famous. Manager Shady will produce my last play."

For a second she looked at him. There could be no doubting his sincerity. Animated face, eager manner and cheery voice, so different from his usual discouraged expression. Mr. Van Dome was doing everything possible to convince her with his ruse.

"Oh, Mr. Van Dome," she exclaimed. "Isn't it a funny world? I knew you would do it. Why, only last night I dreamed of your wonderful success. I could hear the audience shouting, 'Author, author, speech!' Funny I forgot to speak of it this morning."

There was nothing funny about it to Mr. Van Dome. Had he returned with the same serious expression he had worn when he departed he would have received a cold reception.

Mrs. Toomey was beaming all over. No doubt she expected the four dollars to air themselves.

"Manager Shady wants me to have dinner with him to-morrow night at the Biltmore." Mr. Van Dome shot this across as though he was in the habit of dining with theatrical managers every night. "I will ask him to advance me some money, Mrs. Toomey."

The landlady smiled.

"That's all right, Mr. Van Dome. Go right up-stairs and make yourself at home. Funny world, isn't it? Why only yesterday I says to my husband, 'There's a man for you, that Mr. Van Dome. Watch him,' says I, 'his play will go.' And then my dream. Funny world, isn't it?"

But Mr. Van Dome had made a courteous bow and was ascending the stairs. The funny world business was all right, but some people in it he thought were much funnier.

## III.

THE dance at the Deerfoot Club was in full swing. Mr. Van Dome swaggered through the room, quite unnoticed. At a dance a strange face is not challenged.

But Mr. Van Dome felt lonely. He knew no one and no one seemed to know him. So he kept walking until he came to a conservatory to the left of the dancers. It was deserted. Chairs and settees were scattered about, and here and there a large palm. The place looked inviting and he sat down.

His idea in accepting Ira's invitation was to meet some of the swell crowd. But upon entering the club he was seized with stage-fright. Maybe it would wear off. Later on he would venture outside, perhaps a chance acquaintance with one of the men, an introduction here and there, and then—

Suddenly he stopped speculating as a girl appeared in the conservatory. He could have sworn she smiled at him. She was walking towards him, was about to pass, when her eyes closed, she staggered and sank to the settee by his side.

Of all the unfortunate occurrences. It was for him to summon her friends or go for the usual glass of water. This would make him conspicuous. People would ask who he was. He was deliberating what he should do when the girl opened her eyes.

"Did I frighten you?" she asked.

Mr. Van Dome looked into her face. The girl was beautiful, her voice charming and he felt a giddy sensation as she kept gazing at him with half veiled eyes.

"Not exactly," he replied. "Are you ill?"

She shook her head.

"Much better, thank you. Ate lobster at the Knickerbocker. Dancing afterwards sort of upset me, you know."

Mr. Van Dome didn't know. The Knickerbocker, lobster and dancing after lobster were not in his line.

"You should be careful," he replied, quite

unperturbed. "Dancing after lobster is very bad."

The girl smiled.

"One does foolish things," she said. "But wasn't it fortunate you were here. I might have fainted and died."

She pulled a little baby stuff when she said this and flashed him an inviting look.

"Very glad I was here," he ventured. "Just dropped in to look around. In the seclusion of the conservatory I was revolving the plot of my new play."

The girl became interested.

"Don't tell me you're a playwright?" she said.

"Only one of the many," he truthfully acknowledged. "But one of the few, I dare say, who writes the big things of life."

"How delightful," she murmured. "May I ask your name?"

"James Lawrence Van Dome." He had no hesitancy in shooting this across. It had a punch and evidently impressed her.

"And yours?" he inquired.

"Mine is Evelyn Walton. You see, I have only two. But, then, I'm only a girl," she added, believing she had impressed him with this cute remark.

"And a very beautiful girl," he murmured. "Do you know you would be ideal for the lead in a play I am writing?"

She drew a little closer to him.

"But I'm not an actress," she whispered. "Just a society girl. A social butterfly."

She said this with a sigh, as though life in general bored her.

"Father," she continued, "wanted to send me to a dramatic school. Poor, dear father, he's so good to me."

"Perhaps your father is a devotee of the dramatic art?" Mr. Van Dome suggested.

"Not exactly," she replied, fearing he had cornered her over the strange word. "He's a promoter. His ten million dollar patent keeps him busy just now."

Mr. Van Dome felt she misunderstood him. However, he was glad she was speaking of father.

"The poor business man works hard," he remarked casually.

"But I want to see a man work hard," she replied overemphatically. "No matter what he does. He could be a coal heaver, and if he believed in hard work he would be a real man."

She had read something like that in a book once. No doubt it would impress the man who wrote the big things of life.

During the conversation no one had entered the conservatory. The dancing mania seemed to be holding its own. The orchestra had stopped playing and much applause started it off again. The music this time was a dreamy waltz.

Mr. Van Dome folded his arms and stared ahead with a Hamlet air. He was conscious the girl by his side was beginning to be interested in him and he decided to play his ace.

Turning, he watched her for a moment. There was something roguish in her eyes, but to make love advances just now would be disastrous.

A girl whose father had a ten million dollar patent should be lured by romance, not brought to the block too hastily.

"May I call to see you some evening?" he asked.

Evelyn had expected and was prepared for this. She was going to Dorothy Duell's the following night. Dorothy lived in a private house in one of New York's exclusive sections. The Duells employed a butler who had a good strong arm for opening doors.

It was the chance of her life. She could give a good excuse to Dorothy. In fact she had the whole scheme worked out.

"Suppose you call to-morrow night," she said. "I shan't be home thereafter for several weeks."

"Very convenient for me, too," he assured her. "Let us say half-past eight."

Evelyn gave him the address. Mr. Van Dome nodded approvingly. People who lived in that section had money. Money could produce plays. Produced plays sometimes made playwrights. And sometimes they didn't, but Mr. Van Dome failed to consider this.

Now that he had a promised entrée he would beat a retreat. Removing from his pocket an old silver watch his grandfather had given him, he glanced at it and dropped it back into place.

"It's ten o'clock," he said. "I must leave, Miss Walton."

"Must you really?"

"Positively. I have an appointment for ten-thirty with Manager Shady. He is interested in my play and wants to read the last act to-night."

Evelyn gave him an admiring look. What a wonderful man he was. True, not handsome or even good-looking, but something very manly and earnest about his per-

sonality. She noticed his deep voice, which perhaps was his biggest asset.

"Well, if you must," she said, holding out her hand. "Business always before pleasure."

He took the outstretched fingers in his.

"But after the business there will be time for pleasure. Good night, Miss Walton," he said. "To me it has been a very happy meeting."

"And to me," she replied, casting a shy glance at him. "*Au revoir*, then, until to-morrow."

Mr. James Lawrence Van Dome left the Deerfoot Club treading on air, his mind awhirl and heart aflutter. He did not see Ira around and was glad of it.

Out in the street he started for the boarding-house. Of all the impossible things! A beautiful girl with money. And she was attracted to him!

As he walked along with hurried steps he made a firm resolution. He would get a position. She wanted a man who worked hard. A real man.

Mr. Van Dome nodded approvingly. He made a mental note of the line. Perhaps he would use it some time for a line in one of his plays.

He was about to turn the corner when a sign in a real estate office caught his eye.

MAN WANTED

He wrote down the name and address of the firm. To-morrow he would be up early and he meant to get that job.

Back at the club the dance was over. Evelyn had been looking for Dorothy and at last found her.

"Dorothy," she said, "what do you think? I met a playwright here to-night."

"A playwright?" Dorothy repeated. "Who was he?"

"James Lawrence Van Dome. Oh, Dot, he's so brilliant!"

Dorothy knit her brows. She knew of many authors, but professed to know all of them. It was her hobby to impress her friends with this. She was a girl who would never admit she had not heard of a well-known author once his name was discussed.

"James Lawrence Van Dome?" she repeated. "Oh, to be sure. Was he here, Evelyn? Why, he wrote—"

Dorothy bit her lip. This was her favorite method for jogging her memory.

Evelyn was patiently waiting. Dorothy had heard of him. It was enough. Dorothy Duell was an authority on authors.

"So exasperating," Dorothy declared. "His big play is on the tip of my tongue, but I can't remember its name. Well, what did he have to say?"

Evelyn smiled.

"Wanted to call on me to-morrow night. Said he was going away the day after for several weeks. Our apartment is being renovated, workmen in and everything all upset, you know. It was out of the question. Then I suddenly thought of my appointment with you and invited him to call there."

Naturally Evelyn did not tell Dorothy that Mr. Van Dome was presumably going to call at "Miss Walton's home." She would introduce Dorothy quite properly as her friend, and then flash her to lose herself for a time while she had a few words with the celebrated man.

She was quite surprised then to hear Dorothy laugh.

"But, Evelyn," she said, "I forgot to tell you. Father said this evening he would take you and me to the theatre to-morrow night. A friend of his is having a play put on."

Evelyn could have cried out for sheer joy. Her scheme was working far better than she had hoped.

"But, Dorothy," she said, "I did not know this. What am I to do?"

"Perhaps he could go with us," Dorothy suggested.

Evelyn shook her head.

"He's not to call before eight-thirty, and I don't know where to reach him."

Dorothy nodded.

"I'll tell you what to do then, Evelyn. I'll invite Olive instead and tell father you were ill. We'll leave the house about seven-forty-five. You call say at eight, and I'll arrange with Hawley to let you in. We won't be home much before twelve," she added with a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

Evelyn seized her hands.

"Dot, you're a dear!" she cried.

Dorothy smiled.

"After he goes you can steal up to my room," she said. "Father will never know

because he leaves early in the morning for business. And, Evelyn, do try to fall in love."

IV.

THE following night found Evelyn Walton standing on the Duell stoop, ringing the front-door bell. It was several minutes before eight.

The sanctimonious Hawley opened the door, bowed and then went below. Dorothy had said she would arrange matters with the butler, so Evelyn knew it was not necessary to speak of the celebrity's call.

She went to Dorothy's room, removed her hat and coat and sat down to wait. She looked very fetching in her evening dress and as she surveyed herself in a mirror she was well aware of her attractiveness.

So for the next half hour she let her mind dream visions of wealth, a home like Dorothy's, a butler, things her heart craved, not idiotic ten million dollar patents, but realities. The man who wrote the big things of life could produce these and she meant to get him and them by hook or crook.

And the man who supposedly wrote the big things of life was just then ascending the front stoop noting with an approving eye the exterior of the house. He, too, had ambitions, perhaps a latent ability, but life's hard struggle had crushed and cowered him, and he meant to do everything in his power to get the girl whose father presumably had a ten million dollar patent cinched.

The front door-bell rang. Evelyn flew to the mirror for a last look, then she heard Hawley coming up the stairs. The butler made his announcement and descended. Evelyn waited several seconds and then went below.

Mr. James Lawrence Van Dome arose from his chair to greet her. Evelyn noticed he was quite formal. He was dressed again in evening clothes.

For a second they gazed at each other. His eyes flashed admiration, hers a coyness which was one of her chief arts for attracting men.

Then slowly she advanced towards him, holding out her hand. He clasped it eagerly in his.

"Silence," he smiled, "all silence. For five seconds I have been standing here and you've not said a word."

"But I've done an awful lot of looking," she laughed. "Girls, you know, don't *always* talk."

She found a place on a lounge and he sat down again in his chair. The conversation was on everyday topics, each being careful not to get in too deep.

It would never do for her to impress him with deep subjects, science, etc., the way she could with girls and young fellows who knew nothing about them. With a brainy man she had to be cautious.

And he could not afford to discuss his ideas with her as he did with Ira Hall, who had sat up on the farm and listened with awe and admiration while he talked his superior knowledge, using big words Ira never heard of.

Girls in wealthy families had private tutors and then went to finishing schools where they studied higher mathematics and the solar system.

So, for some time they talked on general subjects till the grandfather clock in the foyer hall chimed nine strokes.

Evelyn suddenly looked at him.

"I'm afraid you're not comfortable in that chair," she said.

Mr. Van Dome followed up the lead.

"There is a place in which I would be more comfortable," he remarked.

"Heaven?" she asked.

"By your side," he replied.

"Then come and sit by me, Sir James," she laughed.

Mr. Van Dome graciously complied.

"Father and mother have gone to the opera," she explained shamelessly. "They wanted me to go, but I told them I had a friend calling."

Mr. Van Dome knew the chance had come to show how considerate he could be.

"I hope I have not interfered with your plans," he said. "You know—"

"How silly!" she mocked. "Of course not." She cast one of her shy glances at him. "It's not every night a girl has the honor of a playwright's company, you know."

Mr. Van Dome suddenly felt warm around the collar.

"To be sure," he agreed, "and may I add—"

He suddenly stopped.

"What?" she asked.

"Perhaps I should not," he hesitated.

"Please," and she placed a hand on his arm. "Tell me."

He turned and took her hand in his. He was conscious she made no move to draw it away.

"Nothing much really. I was only going to say what you have heard hundreds of times."

She stared at him with an innocent look. Signs of sentiment were beginning to appear.

"You have not told me," she reminded him.

"You are a very beautiful girl," he hurriedly declared. "Now haven't you heard it hundreds of times?"

She smiled at him, shook her head, then buried it on her arm.

"Do you believe in love at first sight?" he asked.

Evelyn knew the time had come to display a little art. So she sighed and turned her head slowly away.

"Do you?" she whispered. She gave a little gasp to make believe he was stirring her emotions.

For a while he did not answer, but sat staring ahead. He tightened his clasp on her hand and his heart beat rapidly as she returned the pressure. But he did not speak and for some time they both sat in silence.

The grandfather clock was ticking away the seconds and suddenly struck ten.

Evelyn glanced at him. He was still looking ahead, apparently interested in a lamp at the other end of the room.

"Why don't you say something?" she whispered.

Mr. Van Dome had much to say. He was deliberating whether the time had come for his declaration. Matters seemed to be progressing rapidly. But the girl seemed to be in a receptive mood for sentiment. She was romantic, undoubtedly the type who wanted a man to carry her by storm.

So like many women before her Evelyn played the game. And like many men before him Mr. Van Dome unconsciously followed her leads.

"You are very deep," she said, believing this would flatter him. "To-night you are so pensive."

"To-night," he murmured, "I feel happy. I wonder why?"

"Perhaps your play," she suggested.

"Not that," he replied. "Not that."

He was becoming quite dramatic. He was racking his brain for some of the brilliant love lines in the "Battle of Battles," but none seemed to come to him.

She was hoping he would hurry up. She imparted a little reminder by squeezing his hand and sighing again.

Playwrights, she thought, were very poor lovers. Some of the fellows she knew could quote well known poets. Some, in fact, were quite original at coining new stuff about woman's eyes and the moon.

At last he turned to her. His deep brown study seemed to be over. For at least a minute he looked into her eyes. She held his gaze, then dropped her own.

The next second his arm went around her and his lips were pressed to hers.

"You're the only woman," he was gasping between fervent smacks, "who has stirred my emotions. Evelyn, I love you."

"Jim," she murmured. It was quite proper to call him "Jim" now that he loved her. "You're smothering me."

But Jim seemed to be strong for the smothering business, for she had to remind him again before he desisted.

"And do you love me?" he breathlessly asked. "Do you, Evelyn?"

"Do I?" she whispered, holding his face between her hands. "Jim, I loved you the minute I saw you."

He closed his eyes, then slowly opened them. Taking her two hands in his, he gazed at her.

"Will you be my wife?" he slowly asked.

"But, Jim," she murmured. "So soon?"

"The sooner the better, dear."

They mutually thought there was common sense in the expression.

"I will go to your father," he continued, "confess my love, and ask for your hand."

"But father might say 'no,'" she replied. "Jim, he wants me to marry a duke. But I will not, for I love you."

Mr. Van Dome inhaled a deep breath. Love was peculiar. The girl was already fighting for him.

"Maybe if I spoke of your happiness?" he suggested. "Surely he would not object."

"No, no, Jim. It would never do. I have it. Let us elope."

"Elope! When?"

"The night after to-morrow I will meet you in the Knickerbocker lobby at eight o'clock. We'll go to Philadelphia."

Mr. Van Dome came to earth for the first time in an hour. Elopements cost money. But to have spoken of this now would have spoiled matters. Undoubtedly a rich girl would carry some with her. If not he could say he forgot to draw from the bank. She could easily return home and secure enough. After all, she loved him and with her money did not count.

"Very well," he said, "the night after tomorrow. I'll be waiting."

And for a long while they sat holding hands, dreaming dreams, one of life's luxuries, the other of ten million dollars and the success of the "Battle of Battles."

Ten-thirty struck from the grandfather clock. Evelyn jumped. Discretion told her to get him out. He might sit too long. Should the Duells come home all would be lost.

"Jim, dear," she said. "You must go. My beauty sleep, you know, before twelve."

Mr. Van Dome arose. He was reluctant about leaving, but she finally maneuvered him to the front door.

"Good-night, sweetheart," he whispered, folding her in his arms. "Keep our secret well."

"In my heart," she murmured. "Good-night, Jim, I'll be waiting where we said."

A last lingering kiss, the door opened and he was gone.

V.

Mr. James Lawrence Van Dome descended the front stoop in even more of a trance than he had experienced when he left the Deerfoot Club.

He held his head high and walked with an elastic step. At last life was becoming more than mere existence. He reflected that he evidently possessed a wonderfully magnetic charm, a something about his personality that lured an heiress, but failed to attract office-boys.

He turned the corner and headed toward Broadway. He walked like one in a dream. He could hardly believe his apparent good fortune. And the girl loved him! It seemed too good to be true.

Ten minutes' walk brought him to the Great White Way. He remembered passing over the identical spot two days before, downtrodden and discouraged. But now—

His eye caught the glare of electric lights spelling the name of a popular Broadway show. He inwardly chuckled. Lights would flash on Times Square with the name "Battle of Battles," and that before long.

Mr. Shady would never get the chance to put on his masterpiece, for James Lawrence Van Dome decided to become his own producer.

The following afternoon Evelyn returned home. She had said nothing to Dorothy about the elopement and meant to be just as conservative with her mother and father.

The mother was ironing when she entered the flat. Sounds coming from the rear indicated that the inventor was still at it.

With a weary sigh she dropped into a chair and glanced around the room. The very atmosphere of the place jarred her. It was more distasteful than ever.

An evening in a brownstone private house with a playwright who could give her luxuries made home actually unbearable. But it would not be for long. Soon she would have all her heart desired.

She closed her eyes. One of her day dreams was starting. It was rudely awakened by the inventor, who just then entered the room.

"Well," he asked, "how was the show?"

Evelyn looked at him in despair. As usual he had a hammer in his hand.

"I'll tell you later," she said wearily.

After dinner that night the mother and father went to the movies. Evelyn declined to go. She was glad they had gone.

Going to her closet she took out several dresses, a suit and two hats. Now that she was to become the wife of a playwright she would keep up the bluff. After the marriage she would tell him her father had lost his money in the stock market. After all, Jim would not care. She knew he loved her, and with him money did not count.

She expected to have a good time in Philadelphia. Clothes were essential. She remembered she had a small trunk in the cellar which Mr. Pringle, the janitor, had put away. While her mother and father were out she would pack the trunk and ship it on to the Bellevue-Stratford.

Going to the inventor's writing-desk she got pen and ink and a plain card on which she wrote, "Mrs. James Lawrence Van Dome, Bellevue-Stratford, Philadelphia, Pa." She could trust to Pringle for secrecy.

Picking up the clothes and card, she started down-stairs. In the cellar she met the janitor.

"Mr. Pringle," she said, "would you please get my trunk?"

"Going away?" he asked.

"For a while," she replied. "I want it shipped to Philadelphia. The address is on this card."

Pringle nodded.

"I'll tell you, Mr. Pringle," she said confidentially, "but say nothing about it. I'm going to be—"

Suddenly from the front of the cellar a deep voice issued. "I want a man to work

hard. He could be a coal heaver and if he believed in hard work he'd be a real man."

Something about the expression and voice startled her. She felt weak in the knees.

"What was that?"

Pringle spat out in disgust.

"A nut," he muttered. "A tam fool. I vanted a man to help me und der real estate agent sends a bug. He tinks he's a playwriter."

But Evelyn did not hear him, for the door opened and James Lawrence Van Dome stood before her, dressed in overalls, a coal shovel slung across his shoulder.

For a second they stared at each other and then she fainted in Pringle's arms.

"See vat you did!" shouted the janitor. "Dunder und Blitzen, you'd scare anybody!"

With muttered oaths he gathered her up and started up the stairs.

Mr. Van Dome meanwhile stood leaning against the wall, faint and weak with emotion.

Her clothes were lying on the floor and also the card. He picked it up, read and gasped.

Going to the dumbwaiter he looked over the names. "Walton" belonged to the top floor.

His easy conquest, the ten million dollar patent, and her willingness to elope were all significant now.

Hastily removing his overalls, he threw on his hat and coat and went out into the night.

"I might have known," he muttered, "that she was the heiress's maid."

# The Stop-Over

by Helen E. Prouty

WHEN Henderson paid the chauffeur of the taxicab he glanced at his watch. It was ten minutes past one. The long, wide street, with its double rows of trees and dark-stone houses, was silent and empty.

A gleam of light fell from the doorway of the house before which he stood and illumined its steps. At a little distance, under an arc lamp, a policeman was regarding him with evident curiosity, and it suddenly occurred to Henderson that this was a slightly unconventional hour for calling; but then he and old John Rivers had often done unusual things and it was like John to insist upon this.

Henderson mounted the steps and rang the bell. The door was immediately opened by a young lady, and Henderson entered a large, softly lighted hall.

"You're Mr. Henderson," said the girl, holding out her hand, "and I'm Mr. Rivers's daughter."

"This is an unexpected pleasure," returned Henderson. "I understood from your father that the family were all in the country."

"So they are," she laughed, "all but me. I came up yesterday without writing. Come into the library," she added, and led the way across the hall.

It was a hot summer night, but the de-

lightful room which they entered was refreshingly cool—the long windows opening evidently upon a side garden, admitted a breeze and deep wicker chairs were skilfully grouped in the draft. A young man, standing before a cabinet at the farther end of the room, turned at their entrance and advanced to meet them.

"My husband, Mr. Fessenden," said the lady.

Henderson glanced about with pleasure. He was glad that old John's home was like this, glad that he had such a pretty daughter, and glad that the tall, athletic-looking son-in-law so evidently "belonged." But where was John?

"There is a dreadful disappointment in store for you," said Mrs. Fessenden as they seated themselves. "Father couldn't get here after all." She took a slip of paper from the table by her side and passed it to Henderson. "Here's his telegram. Please read it."

"Car broke down. Missed train. Have supper for Henderson arriving 1 A.M. Will meet Henderson 6 A.M. Union Station."

"It's bad luck, isn't it," sympathized the young man.

"I'm very sorry," said Henderson gravely. "And then," he added, "it's a shame to keep you people up all night this way. I will go back to the station at once."

"Indeed no," said Mrs. Fessenden. "You're father's old chum and we're wild to know you. Besides, I have supper quite ready, and it's really a lark, isn't it, Tommy?"

"Tommy," assented heartily and they fell into a pleasant conversation in which Henderson explained his hurried trip across the continent to catch a Pacific steamer and the intricate juggling of schedules which had won for him this brief stop-over.

"I haven't seen John for ten years," he finished.

"And you will have only half an hour together in the morning," lamented the daughter.

A clock chimed the half hour, and Mrs. Fessenden rose.

"I'm going to make coffee," she explained. "The servants are all in the country, too, you know. Tommy, when I call, show Mr. Henderson out to the dining-room."

The two men settled themselves comfortably and began talking automobiles. As Henderson manufactured a popular car and young Fessenden was evidently an enthusiastic driver and able to appreciate technicalities they discussed the subject with mutual pleasure.

Presently they were summoned to the dining-room. The delicious little supper, attractively served, and the undeniably pretty Mrs. Fessenden increased Henderson's approval. He felt that John was a lucky man.

They were lingering over their coffee when Mrs. Fessenden leaned across the table and said to her husband: "Shall we tell him, Tommy."

Fessenden was evidently startled and embarrassed. He actually flushed under his heavy tan. But it was quite evident that he deferred to his wife, so he nodded and mumbled an assent.

"You're in the midst of a romance," she said then, turning to Henderson. "Tommy and I are eloping to-night and this is our wedding supper."

"Eloping!" gasped Henderson.

"Yes," she explained. "We were married this afternoon, and only came here to pack some of my things, when father's telegram arrived. He sent it to the housekeeper, but I had let her go to some of her relatives for a two days' visit, so you unwittingly became our wedding guest."

Henderson tried hard to rally to the situation, but he had a pretty daughter of his own, and, like most fathers, was conventional to the core. He glanced sharply at the young man and felt less sure of him than he had done half an hour before.

"My child," he expostulated, "I'm afraid you are doing a very foolish thing, something which will grieve your father."

"No," she replied, "I do not think so. It will probably astonish father, but not grieve him. Tom and I have been engaged a long time, but since mother's death father has shrunk from the thought of my marrying, and finally I decided simply to make it very quiet and spare him all the agitation of a wedding."

Henderson did not feel that it was his place to cast a shadow on what should be a happy occasion, so although he could not approve on principle, he refrained from further comment.

A bottle of champagne was opened. He toasted the bride very prettily. She was a fascinating girl and it was after three o'clock when they rose from the table.

"I think," said Henderson, as they reentered the library, "that if you will excuse me, Mrs. Fessenden, I will write a letter to your father explaining the details of the business matter we were to have talked over. There will not be time to say much in the few minutes we shall have together at the station, and it is rather a complicated affair."

"Certainly," she assented. "While you do that I will finish my packing and Tom shall help me. We are planning to take the four-forty east," she added, "and we have ordered a taxi to be here at four. We can all go to the station together."

Henderson seated himself at the desk and began his letter. His mind was so full of the elopement that he found it very difficult to concentrate on the business matter.

His pen moved slowly, presently it faltered and rolled to the floor. Henderson's head fell forward upon the desk and he slept.

He was roused by Fessenden's touch upon his shoulder and opened bewildered eyes to see that the room was filling with daylight.

"The taxi is late," explained the young man, "and we shall have to hurry."

Henderson rose slowly to his feet. He felt unaccountably stiff and stupid. Indeed it was an appreciable space of time before he could recall the events of the night.

Fessenden took his arm and hurried him to the hall. The front door stood open and Mrs. Fessenden was directing the chauffeur who was carrying out her numerous bags. Henderson struggled awkwardly into his dust-coat and followed his host into the cab.

His head was aching horribly and he found it hard to talk. Fessenden was anxious about the time. He sat with his watch in his hand and urged the driver to greater speed.

They whirled through silent residential streets down into the center of the city, where trolley-cars were already beginning to make their appearance. It was a bit after four-thirty when they sighted the station, and quite thirty-five, when, each man laden with a heavy bag, followed by two porters with suit-cases, they plunged wildly through interminable spaces to the train.

The Pullmans were forward and were moving when the last bag was pushed up the steps of the car by the panting Henderson. He waved a feeble hand to the bride and groom and thoroughly exhausted, sought the station barber.

While he was being shaved and massaged and generally brought to life again, he pondered upon how he should break the news of the elopement to John Rivers. Personally Henderson had rather a definite idea of how he should receive a similar message, and the only relief he could imagine in the situation was its necessary brevity.

"It will only be for half an hour," he consoled himself.

A cup of coffee and a turn in the fresh air enable him to meet the incoming six o'clock train with a degree of composure.

"Same old John, and fat as ever," he mused, as the ponderous figure of his friend appeared at the gate.

The two men were genuinely fond of each other and their greeting was warm. Rivers was full of apologies and lamentations at having missed the visit and Henderson, a nervous eye on the clock, made several ineffectual attempts to stem the current of words and break his news.

At last he interrupted desperately:

"John, I'm afraid you'll be awfully cut up when I tell you what happened this morning. Your daughter has eloped with Mr. Fessenden. In fact, I put them on the New York train."

"You did what?" roared John.

"Put your daughter and Mr. Fessenden on the train."

"But, man, I haven't any daughter."

"The deuce! You haven't?"

"No, of course not. You know that. You know that my children are all boys."

"Well—'er—I forgot. I wasn't certain—she said she was your daughter and she entertained me beautifully."

"She entertained you at my house?"

"Certainly, yes."

"What sort of looking girl was she? Where was the housekeeper?"

"The housekeeper has gone on a vacation. Why, the girl was pretty with black hair. I think she had blue eyes."

"Blue eyes and black hair—that's she!" exclaimed Rivers, suddenly collecting himself. "Henderson," he continued, "that was my secretary, Miss O'Neal. And Fessenden — Fessenden? Why, of course! That reckless chauffeur I dismissed last winter. By Jove! I'll bet they went through the house and made a clean sweep of everything."

Henderson remembered the heavy bags —"John," he said, "I'm afraid they did."

# Young Blood

By A. Lincoln Bender

## I.

IN old Bruce Cameron's career, both business and social, nothing pleased him more than the fact that his son Benny had completed his college course near the head of the class, and with a collection of athletic honors that would have made old Hercules purple with envy.

Bruce, proprietor of Waterburg's biggest store—which establishment, by the way, sold everything from tacks to pianos—was a keen, shrewd business man, who had risen from clerk in this same shop, to owner. He was one of those men, large in body and brain, who had a disconcerting habit of peering at one from behind his steel-rimmed spectacles, and saying nothing.

He was the bane of every salesman on the route, for none ever knew whether they had convinced him that their line was the best, or whether he was secretly laughing at them. When he spoke, which was as infrequently as possible, he gave the impression of a man biting off a piece of hard candy.

His square jaw moved with precision and regularity, and with a minimum of phrases. To end an interview, he would simply swing about in his swivel chair, read the mail or reports that were forever on his desk, and the caller had no other alternative than to pick up his samples, his hat, and beat a hasty retreat.

The Emporium, as the establishment was known, had the biggest trade in the county. Waterburg itself, boasting a population of close to fifteen thousand, and the surrounding towns in the manufacturing district, patronized it exclusively, much to the multiplication of the dollars that poured into Bruce Cameron's coffers.

It was a huge, barnlike building, situated on the main thoroughfare, directly opposite the railroad station, with a double door entrance, and two small windows on each side. Inside, it reminded one of the old general stores of which our grandfathers used to talk.

Yet Bruce had made a fortune out of it. So secure was he in his faith in the Emporium, and the good will that he had built up during his thirty-odd years at the old stand, that modern methods had no appeal for him.

In point of fact, he had successfully held his own against two efforts to swing the dollars to other channels by modern methods, much to the chagrin and loss of his competitors.

Now he momentarily expected his son, the man whom he would train to take his place, to hustle in, after a wonderful four years at the university. In his own life, education had not been secured except after hours, and by the hardest kind of toil. His was that knowledge which the College of Hard Knocks and Experience only can impart.

The morning train was due at nine-thirty,

and on it he knew that Benny would arrive. His office overlooked the little station—a point of which he was justly proud. It was just another little bit of the strategy that made Bruce Cameron the most talked of man in the county.

From his vantage point he could scrutinize all the passengers, marking those which had the appearance of salesmen, and judge them even before they realized that he knew they were in town.

Usually Bruce was at his desk sharp at eight o'clock, but this morning he had got down earlier so as to clear up some of his detail work before his successor put in his appearance. This he had done, and now he pulled his chair to the window, and glanced at the little clock, above which was tacked this legend: "I work while others sleep—hence I require no watching!"

It pointed the quarter after the hour, and the sturdy old man, his thick hair just graying at the temples, lit a cigar, which was the only dissipation he ever allowed himself.

It was over a year since he had seen Benny, for on the last holidays the boy had gone South on an invitation of one of his classmates, and the pioneer tradesman's heart began to jump faster at the anticipation of the greeting. But a short fifteen minutes now, and Benny would be in the office of which he was to be the future guardian!

"An education—knowledge, that which I myself did not have," the old man ruminated, as the faint echo of the approaching train came to his ears. "And Benny will make the best of it, I hope!"

On the platform of the station, the baggage man was wheeling his truck preparatory to the rush, while others gathered to meet friends and acquaintances.

A minute later there was a great belch of steam, and the huge iron horse ripped and snorted to a stop.

A smile fastened itself on Bruce's lips, as a stream of passengers filled the station platform, and a second later, as he caught sight of the tall, lean form of his son, the smile spread itself all over his square, keen features. Across the street, his long, rangy stride seeming to the watching man to speak of determination, came Benny. A second later there was a happy greeting below, a dash of footsteps on the stairs, and the door of Bruce Cameron's private office was flung open.

"Dad, you old bear," cried the young fellow, his deep blue eyes sparkling.

"Ben, my son," returned the wealthiest man in the county, as he gripped the outstretched hand, and placed his other on Ben's shoulder.

For a moment that almost holy silence that rests between two men as they greet, shrouded them, then the younger man burst out:

"The same old dad! And how well you look! Gosh, but business must have been good!"

"Never better, son, never better. And now that you are here to take up the reins, I feel that my 'plugging' as you call it, has not been in vain!"

"Spoken like the man that you are," smiled Ben, as he pulled forward a chair and made himself comfortable.

Another instant, and he had secured a cigarette and lit the weed. At his first move, Bruce said not a word. Now, as the blue smoke trickled from Ben's nostrils, a momentary flash of annoyance crossed his face.

"Cigarettes, Ben?" he asked.

"Yep. Finished training a month ago, and acquired the habit down at the banquet!"

"Humph," grunted his father. Then he broke out in a new tack.

"Feel like starting right in?"

A deep laugh came from the young fellow's throat.

"Good Lord, daddy," he laughed, "give me a chance to get settled, and renew my old acquaintances. But, surely, in answer to your question, little Benny is ready to roll up his sleeves, and pitch bales and cases around with the best of them."

His father said nothing, but from the look that flashed to his piercing eyes Ben knew that he was satisfied with the reply.

"The first thing, dad," went on the young, dynamic fellow, as he glanced about the dingy office, "is to clear this shop up. Put in new furniture; get a stenographer; make it an up-to-date department store, with regular salespeople, and a floor manager who will direct our patrons to the proper wares. This place is too dingy, too dark, too—er—too, not exactly dirty, but depressing!"

As he finished speaking, his father peered at him. The look was pitying—such a look as the honor man gives the dunce of the class when he jumbles some question in reci-

tation. His voice was hard and cutting, as he said:

"You start that sort of thing already, eh? Well, I imagined that college education would put some of those new fangled ideas in your head. Let me tell you, Ben, that such notions have no place in the Emporium. What it has been, it will always be! I have run this business for thirty years, and it has always been good enough for me; we shall have no changes at this late date!"

But instead of becoming depressed at his father's words, Ben allowed that encouraging smile of his to flash to his lips.

"New blood is what you need, dad," he declared, "and I'm here to supply it. But let's get down to business. I want to shake hands with all my old chums. Curly Hawkins, Snake Simpkins, and the rest. Good-by; see you later!"

As he disappeared Bruce Cameron shook his head, and what was suspiciously like a groan issued from his lips.

"New blood," he snorted. "Just as I thought. College did not make a man of him after all. But by all that's holy—I will! He'll learn this business as I learned it. From the ground up, and no high-fandangled notions will distort his mind!"

And for the first time in all his thirty years of making money, Bruce Cameron spat on the floor.

II.

CONTRARY to all expectations, Ben Cameron did not elaborate on his plans of injecting new blood into the business. Bruce, who knew the strain of determination with which he had endowed his son, expected trouble, but none came.

Cheerfully Ben took up his burdens, and the methods that his father laid down. First on the floor proper, where he sold; then after a week, in the office, where he met all the salesmen, and tried his hand at buying.

To the watchful eyes of the old man, Ben was to be a chip off the old block. He was shrewd, keen, clever, and Bruce Cameron chuckled with joy, as Ben succeeded in driving bargain after bargain.

But the quietness with which Ben took up his duties was simply the calm before the storm.

It was a month after he had started in that the first bomb was fired. Bruce had acceded to his son's requests that he take a rest now, and it was nine o'clock before he arrived in the mornings.

Ben had taken a lot of detail work off his hands, and the manner in which he handled it brought pride to the old man's heart. Now, as he came down on this particular morning, he felt in the best of spirits. Ben had shown that he was the man he hoped him to be, and old Bruce was at peace with the world.

But he was in for a wondrous surprise. As he approached the old Emporium, he was surprised at the sounds of labor which asailed his ears. Hammerings, voices raised in commands, and before his astonished eyes across the doors was stuck a huge sign which read:

> **Alterations going on for a bigger, better Emporium, but business continues just the same.**
>
> COME IN!

For perhaps ten minutes, old Bruce, staid as the Pyramids, fixed his gaze on the appalling legend.

Why, for thirty years his Emporium had stood there without an alteration, except minor repairs. It was sacrilegious. It was a supreme attempt to disregard his ideals.

When the first sense of horror wore off, he threw back his shoulders, and stalked inside, past the nauseating sign, his cane thumping the floor. The scene that met his eyes then served as the last straw.

Standing in the center of the floor, a smile on his lips, was his son, directing a score of men in the demolishing of counters and shelves that for over a quarter of a century had held his goods.

"Ben!"

The word shot out like the report of a pistol. The young fellow looked up, and waved a hand.

"'Morning, dad, how are you?" he called.

"Come to the office," barked his father, cheeks reddening from the rage that boiled within him.

"In five minutes, dad; I want to superintend these particular alterations first."

"You'll come this instant!" bawled his father, emphasizing the words with thumps of the cane.

"All right," assented Ben, leaping from the débris.

In silence the old trader led the way to the office. Not until he had closed the door, and strode to the desk, did he vouchsafe another word.

"What does this mean?" he demanded then, his voice hard as brittle steel.

"Just a few improvements, dad," returned Ben, his deep blue eyes taking on a serious look, as he noted the storm signals set.

"Improvements, eh?" howled his father. "Well, let me tell you, young man, there'll be no improvements here. I said that I wanted none, and I mean to be obeyed. This old place has been good enough for the people and me for years, and I don't want anything different."

"But, dad—"

"Don't 'but dad' me," roared his father. "You got a college education, and immediately think that you know more that I do. I said that modern methods won't go in the Emporium, and I mean it. Who are you, to try to teach me how to do business? Who are you to make improvements?"

On Ben's face appeared a hard look of determination. The Scotch ancestry was beginning to boil up in him.

"I dislike to disagree with your methods, dad," he said quietly, "but I am firm in my belief that you are behind the times —that you need young blood in the business!"

"Young blood nothing!" bawled Bruce Cameron, his gray eyes flashing fire. "What you need is a lesson in trade! And, by gad, sir, you shall have it! You are on a salary here, you understand. From disobedience of rules and orders there is but one result. You are fired—do you hear, fired! Go, the cashier will pay you what is due, and you can go out and earn your living the way I had to.

"College education," he snorted, "young blood! Bah! This is what I get. There's your lesson, young man! Disobedience of rules! Learn it! When you think that you have acquired hard, common sense, with no high-falutin ideas, come back and I'll put you to work as a salesman!"

Once again that curious smile broke on his son's lips, and he bowed.

"As you wish, daddy," he replied. "We part the best of friends, I hope!"

And taking his coat and hat he calmly sauntered out at the door, leaving his father puffing hard from the anger that surged up in his heart.

III.

All Waterburg was sitting up and taking notice. On every street corner stood a man upon whom swung a sandwich-like sign that read:

WE'RE COMING!
WATCH OUT FOR US!

WHAT WATERBURG WANTS,
AND THE BEST!

Curious eyes followed the parading men. On the tongues of all was the eternal question: "What does it mean?"

"Some idea for the next election," drawled Sim Hopkins, the station agent.

"Wrong," guessed his crony, old Tom Bailey; "it's one of them goldinged patent medicines, I'll bet!"

But both were wrong. For the next day the men who had paraded came forth with another slogan:

WE'RE A BIG CITY!
BIG CITIES MEAN PROGRESS!

PROGRESS WITH US!

The public was interested deeply in these mysterious messages. From all over town came observations and conjectures. The daily paper was besieged with requests for information, but the editor was as much in the dark as the rest of the population. For two more days the curious signs featured the streets, then they stopped.

In the Emporium, old Bruce Cameron sat hunched over his desk. His nature was such that he would never rescind an order that he had delivered, but deep in his heart lurked the fear that he had been too hasty with his son. But, as he looked at what he called the "mess" the boy had made out of his beloved store, his anger overwhelmed him.

Of Ben himself he had heard nothing. From his position at the window he had seen him board a train for New York, but no word had reached him since.

Then, after a week, when the strange signs began to make their appearance, he forgot that he was angry in the contemplation of this new fool stunt.

On the next corner to the Emporium stood a great four-story building that had once been used as an office edifice, but, unable to support itself, had long been idle.

Now suddenly signs of life showed about

it. Cleaners got busy, and there were other indications of coming occupancy.

It was at this period that the signs again blossomed forth. This time the legend ran:

WATCH FOR US!

Corner of Main and Front Streets

NEXT MONDAY!

"Humph," barked old Bruce, "guess the circus is coming, or something like that!"

But when trainload after trainload of boxes, bales and cases arrived, consigned to "corner of Main and Front Streets," he began to watch developments with more interest.

In fact, everybody for miles around was eager for Monday to come. The first floor of the building had been torn out and huge plate glass windows now shone forth. Behind dark shades a metamorphosis was taking place.

Thousands upon thousands would walk up, try to peer inside, then walk away, interest fixed in their eyes.

The Sunday edition of the *Bugle* carried a full page ad of peculiar character. In the center of the page was but a short paragraph which read:

> To-morrow we greet you with open arms, and everything that Waterburg needs. This ad will entitle the bearer to a brand new dollar bill.

"Well, I'll be gin swizzled," grunted old Bruce Cameron, as he read it. "Talk about fools! That ad will be read by at least twenty-five thousand people, and they are going to give away dollar bills! That's a lie! And, by golly, I'm going down there with this myself, and if it is, I'll make it hot for them, whoever they are!"

The shades were still down at eight o'clock, but promptly at eight thirty, at a given signal, up they went, and to the eyes of the populace was presented a display that rivaled the metropolitan department stores.

Little gasps of admiration filled the air. Paragraphs worded tersely invited the public to step in and claim the dollar offered as a prize.

First to reach the desk was old Bruce Cameron. Expecting to hear a nicely worded speech about inability to supply the demand, he hurled the advertisement to the counter. A second later, so quickly that his breath was fairly taken away, a nice, crisp one dollar bill was handed him.

With wonder in his eyes Bruce walked out. The bill felt like lead. They had done it! The firm of C. H. C. Department Stores, had made good!

But it couldn't last, he assured himself! Sooner or later his reputation would force them to the wall, and he would be alone in the field again! Many had tried it! And they had all failed! He chuckled, as he reached his office, and triumphantly placed the bill in the frame of a picture of Ben.

"I got their first dollar," he chortled, "and I'll get their last, too!"

## IV.

THE miraculous had happenel. C. H. C. Department Stores had come to stay. Any one could see that. There was a beaten path to their place of business. Not one complaint had been made of them! If anything was not as represented, back it came and was replaced.

Twice they had run excursions from the surrounding towns, defraying half the fare if purchases above a certain amount were made!

Their advertising paid them twenty-fold. Their handling of the trade was a marvel to the people of Waterburg. Who were the men behind it all, no one could know. That they were public spirited individuals was seen by the fact that they offered one thousand dollars as a first contribution for a Y. M. C. A. building.

And in all this old Bruce Cameron began to see the handwriting on the wall. His trade dropped off terribly. Men and women who had dealt with him because their grandparents had, now dropped in but infrequently, and then only to make minor purchases.

His clerks became restless, and the break came when two of his oldest employees laid their resignations on his desk, and he saw them smiling behind the counters of the bright, clean C. H. C. Department Stores!

Not a word was heard from his son, except one brief letter, in which Ben stated that he had landed something, and was at work on a new idea he had developed.

It was then that Bruce Cameron began to wonder if he had not made his great error. What he had said could not be done, had been done by a stranger, and his own son had predicted it.

Yes, Ben was right, the public wanted a clean store, competent clerks, smiling ladies to wait on them, and a man, suave and gentlemanly, to direct them to the various departments.

He called at the bank, to see what the status of the new concern was! They were as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar. A quarter of a million was behind them, and their receipts were such that old Bruce's eyes popped open. More in one day than he had ever taken in in a month!

Then, the next morning, he was surprised to receive a courteous letter, asking him to call at the new store and talk over a matter of business.

At first all his pride surged up to his throat, and he picked up the phone, with the only notion of bawling out that he was not going to talk with them. But, down in the store, not a person was walking about!

Swallowing his pride, he walked up the street. He had aged much in the few short months. His Emporium, the pride of four counties, had been virtually driven out of business. He knew it now!

He did not lose anything, except the stock and the money it represented. He was well fixed, but his heart was broken.

The floor manager escorted him directly to the elevator.

"Fourth floor, to your left, Mr. Cameron," he said, softly.

"How the deuce—" exploded Bruce, but the door closed on him, and a few seconds later he was at the top floor, striding along the hall to a door upon which was lettered the words:

"President, Private!"

He felt like a small atom indeed! Ben, had been right! He could not banish that thought from his head. And he, in his blindness of adhering to the old policy, had turned him out!

He groaned, as his hand rested on the knob, and he pushed the door open. A neat office boy, whom he recognized as one of the urchins that used to play around his doors, greeted him and asked him to wait a moment.

He gazed about at the heavy mahogany equipment of the place; then the boy returned.

"This way, Mr. Cameron," said the youth.

A second later he was in the interior office. A bright-faced young fellow, not more than twenty-five, extended his hand.

"Good morning, Mr. Cameron," he smiled, "my name is Handworth. I'm the president of the concern. To get right down to business, Mr. Cameron, I want to know how much you'll take for your stock. We appreciate that you have a lot of good-will, and if we can match your figures we will take it over. Competition may be the life of trade, but there is no use in cutting each other's throats."

The old man gasped. Such an offer seemed incredible. Good will? He smiled! What was it worth now?

He was beaten, licked! And here was a young fellow, offering him a proposition. He wet his dry lips.

How like Benny the young fellow looked! And, he, Bruce Cameron, considered the shrewdest man in Waterburg, had turned his own son out, the son that had proposed just such a store as this magnificent one!

His jaws snapped together.

"I have never taken advantage of any one before," he snapped, "and I don't intend to now! My good will is not worth a nickel!"

"That is for us to decide, Mr. Cameron," said the young man, smiling. "We offer you ten thousand for your stock and good will, and the lawyer is waiting to draw up the papers. What do you say?"

Bruce Cameron's breath came fast. The offer was so generous that he could not do otherwise.

"I'll—Gad, man, it isn't worth it!"

"It's a pleasure to do business with an honest fellow like you," said Handworth quietly. "What is your decision?"

"Bring in the lawyer!" was all Bruce said.

"I'll have our vice-president and treasurer sign, too." Handworth pressed a button and gave the order to the office-boy. An instant later an adjoining door opened, and framed in the opening stood—Benny Cameron.

A smile was on his face as he came forward. His father sat very still for an instant, then with a jump he was on his feet.

"Benny, Benny," he murmured, tears filming his eyes. "You—you are the vice-president of this concern?"

"That's me, daddy," smiled his son. "Handworth is my college chum, who very nicely put up the capital, and I must say that my ideas about young blood were not fallacious!"

For a long time his father remained with

his hand outstretched. Then he walked over to his son.

"You—you make me this offer, after what I did?" he faltered.

"Why not, daddy? It's not sentiment, it's business."

Handworth was smiling at the two.

"Yes, Mr. Cameron, and you have a son of whom you can be justly proud. Here's our proposition. We offer you ten thousand in cash, or, as we prefer, the same amount in stock!"

"In this concern?" gasped the old man.

His son smiled.

"Sure," he said, tersely, "and if you want my advice this time, daddy—"

But he got no further.

"Give me the pen," cried Bruce Cameron. "So that's what the C. H. C. Department Stores meant," he muttered, "Cameron, Handworth and Company, eh?"

Both Handworth and Benny smiled broadly.

"Not on your life, daddy," broke in his son, "C. H. C. means, just this—Cameron, Handworth and Cameron! I knew when I started that you would be with me—eventually!"

"You—darn it," ejaculated his father, "don't tell me too much all at once. I'm too old to take it all in."

"The best of it is to come, daddy," went on Benny, as he pulled a paper from his pocket. "Listen, here's what will make the populace sit up, and take notice. It is a 'scoop,' and the papers will run it in double column. Are you ready?"

For five minutes he read the first paragraph, then, as his father's eyes grew puzzled, he held up his hand.

"Just a moment, daddy, here's the punch. 'And all the time, the public has in reality been purchasing from the original Bruce Cameron, although they did not realize it. He has been behind the new and wonderful C. H. C. Stores in the person of his son. To say that such an advertising scheme is original is putting it mildly. He surely is the same shrewd old business man that Waterburg loves, and the *Bugle* hopes that he will continue to prosper all the time! He is the secretary of the Cameron-Handworth-Cameron Stores. Long life to him!' "

"What do you think of it, Mr. Cameron?" asked the president.

"I'm beyond the power of thinking," the old man said quietly, leaning over and stroking his son's cheek.

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## THE POWER OF PRAISE

A LITTLE word of praise—what joy it brings,
And how it cheers the very soul of things!
'Mid starless night, 'mid sunless day,
'Mid dust and thorns along life's way,
A word of praise—and lo,
About us lilies blow!

A little word of praise—how quickly said,
How far its kindly influence is shed!
The pain, the grief, corroding care,
Life's loneliness, so hard to bear;
A word of praise—and then
The world is glad again!

A little word of praise—we cannot know
The bounds to which the spoken thought may go;
For words have wings of wo or weal,
And thoughts have power to harm or heal;
A word of praise—a gem
In Fortune's diadem!

A little word of praise—so short the time
Ere it will be too late to heed this rime;
Go forth and find some weary soul
Where raging seas of sorrow roll;
A word of praise—and "Peace!"
Shall bid the tempest cease.

*Clarence Urmy*

# The Log-Book

## By the Editor

PURSUING the theme opened up for discussion in the Log-Book last month, I cannot forbear quoting a paragraph I find in a Boston paper, to wit:

> New York State is given credit, in the United States census estimates, for more than one-tenth of the nation's total population. This, of course, entitles New York to a degree of consideration greater than that which might reasonably be hoped for by any of the sister States; but it hardly explains why the rest of the country should be expected to devote so much of its time to admiration of the New York City sky-line.

Reference, of course, is made to the propensity of people from the outlying districts, to say nothing of the middle West and the Pacific Coast, to hike to Manhattan with the intention of "hitting it up on Broadway." This is the alleged New York life, lived chiefly by persons from other cities, that is most generally reflected in stories.

Seeking to show you that the Tenderloin and the Rialto make up only a small portion of the greatest city in the world, I am giving you this month a novel about life across the Harlem River in the Bronx. Next month we will show you another section of the big town, the Washington Heights region, one full of historical associations, which, however, will not be touched upon in

## "HAMPTON OF THE HEIGHTS"

### BY JOSEPH IVERS LAWRENCE

**Author of "The Heir to Three Millions"**

This is a mystery story of the first water. In fact, it begins on the waters of the Hudson when a canoe overturns off Fort Washington Point. Any one starting in on the first chapter without first having read this announcement might fancy the scene laid far away in some such forest region as the Adirondacks. So you see it's an altogether different New York City story from any to which the magazines have accustomed you. Don't fail to read it. It will surely fascinate you whether you live on Washington Heights, New York; Nob Hill, San Francisco, or in the Mississippi Valley.

We make a big jump across the continent with our next actual place story. Full announcement next month; meantime in August we start a new Serial,

## "HIS ISLE OF REFUGE"

### BY FRED C. SMALE

a story without a hero. Of course, there are men in it; in fact, the characters are mostly men, but there is no hero in the usual acceptation of the term, by so much making the tale a real novelty. The scene starts in the West in the depths of a hunting region, where one man turns on his friend with a bold demand. The action shifts East, then out to an isle in the ocean, where events unusual even for desert island yarns take place.

There will be nine chapters in the opening instalment, and I feel sure those of you who like adventure tales will feel well repaid for reading them.

# "DROPPING INTO MEXICO"
## BY F. K. SCRIBNER

is a timely short story that will next month bring back to the ARGOSY pages a contributor who has long been absent from them. Mr. Scribner wrote "The Eleventh Rider" and several other stirring adventure tales for us, and in "Dropping Into Mexico" he has taken an up-to-the-minute situation along the border and woven out of it a narrative replete with thrills.

Do you recall "Cochrane's Australian Stunt" in the March number? Well, in August, Mr. Russell will relate another episode in the career of that slick specimen of American nerve placed against a background in the Antipodes. The new story is called

# "COCHRANE HANDS OUT A LEMON"

and I think you will agree with me that the Scotchman who gets the unwelcome fruit quite deserved to have it put over on him.

## STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER

Readers have been responding to my leader in the May Log in great shape. And it now appears that there *are* a few people that notice who writes a story. I'll start off with the letter of one correspondent, who says I am at liberty to print his roast if I leave off his name and address, which he gives me in full, so I'll only sign here one initial, and the town. I want to add, however, that I had scarcely read his communication when a man appeared in my office and remarked: "That was a ripping novel you had in the MAY ARGOSY." He's a fellow who writes stories himself, and when you get praise from one of these gentlemen, it's going some. But, of course, everybody has a right to his opinion, and now for Mr. M.'s, whose jolts are certainly eased up with courteous shock-absorbers.

St. Albans, Vermont.

The writer very seldom notices or cares who the author of any story may be, except semi-occasionally, in case of one being remarkably good or particularly bad; and, to my mind, you have a beautiful illustration of the latter in the May number, occupying about one-half the entire reading matter. I refer to that much-ado-about-nothing pot-pourri of trash and nonsense called "Getting Away From Thompson," which I deem the most crude, uninteresting story I have waded through in many years, one which never should have been written, submitted, accepted, or published. I am not writing this *for* the Log-Book; it is the candid, honest opinion of one who much prefers to *boost* rather than *knock*, and sincerely trusts, for both your own and author Franklin's sake that an extremely limited number of your readers share my opinion. Should you desire to Log it (it must be at your own, not my wish) you are at liberty to do so; but kindly refrain from using my name and address. Assure Franklin I am not a writer myself; do not contemplate ever attempting to be one; probably couldn't do half as well myself should I ever be so foolish as to make such an attempt, and will be pleased to *boost* should I ever run across another story from the same author which I deem warrants it; also guarantee to read it out of curiosity, and in the hope that it may give me such opportunity.

M.

## "GETTING AWAY FROM THOMPSON" GOT HIM

Now, quickly pass on to the following, received two days later, from a man who gives it, but wishes his address suppressed if we print. You will perhaps recall the number of letters praising the April novel which appeared in the Log last month. Imagine, then, what sort of a magazine an editor would have to make if he relied solely for guidance on what his readers wrote in to him.

New York City.

I get your ARGOSY every month at the newsstand, but lately I am finding fault with the novels. I was barely able to read "Four Speeds for Forest Hill," while I had to lay down your magazine in disgust when I started your April issue containing "A Mystery of Roscoe Conkling Park." But since "Getting Away From Thompson" evens the score, I will find no more fault with the magazine.

V. S.

## MORE PRAISE FOR THE MAY NOVEL

Here's a man who pins his faith to authors' names. I hope he does not feel too lonely in the position he has taken. Note that he, too, likes the May novel.

Russelville, Kentucky.

You would like to hear if the readers notice the authors' names, and want to say that I do, the very first thing; and if I have read anything by

that author and like it, I read his story first. And if the author is a new one, I make a mental note of his name if I like his works; and if I don't like what he writes, I watch for his name, and I do not read anything else by him.

I also saw that you wished to know if the readers wished the continuance of the Log-Book, and wish to say that I do. "Getting Away From Thompson" was just fine.

D. P. HERNDON, JR.

## PICKS STORIES BY AUTHORS

Good! The subjoined just came in by morning's mail, so Mr. Herndon will have company. Incidentally, I am glad to have a Montana reader's dictum on cow-punchers' demeanor. He ought to be in a position to know something of the matter.

Helena, Montana.

I have read THE ARGOSY for eight years. This is the first time I have screwed up crust enough to write, but your question concerning the interest in the authors' names caught my attention. I always pick my stories by the authors. I like your book-length novels, but I play no favorites. I have just finished "Getting Away From Thompson." Let's have some more of Edgar Franklin's.

"Men in the Raw" pleased me immensely. I agree with C. H. Gilmore (April Log). A "cow-puncher" is generally a quiet person. The characters sometimes represented as Westerners would stampede a herd of "dogies" with their chatter. "From Dusk to Dark" is good. Hurry it along.

C. F. MAHER.

## YET ANOTHER BOOST FOR FRANKLIN STORY

Now we switch to an opinion on the other side, from a reader to whom the story means everything, the writer of it nothing. Incidentally, I may remark that "Getting Away From Thompson" appears to be getting away with a bunch of compliments. By the bye, I have just accepted another story by the author of "31754."

Perry, New York.

I have just got through reading the May issue of THE ARGOSY, and find it as interesting as ever, especially the complete novel entitled "Getting Away From Thompson." I very seldom notice the author's name. I judge a story by the interest it arouses in me rather than by who wrote it. I generally read the Log-Book first, then the short stories, and save the best until the last—namely, the complete novel. I like the serials also, but wait until I get each story complete before reading.

"Four Speeds for Forest Hill" and "A Mystery of Roscoe Conkling Park," published in the March and April issues, were certainly O. K. Also the serial, "31754," which I have just finished reading. Altogether I think your magazine the best ever.

V. M. GILLILAND.

## WHAT PART DID THE COVER PLAY WITH YOU?

How many others have been first attracted to THE ARGOSY by the cover picture? As perhaps you may recall, I am always intensely interested in learning what it was that brought our magazine to the attention of the people who are now regularly buying it.

Bozeman, Montana.

If by chance this escapes the waste-basket, it will be my first appearance in the Log-Book. It would, perhaps, interest you to know that it was through one of Zane Grey's stories that I first became interested in THE ARGOSY. Having read nearly all of Zane Grey's books, and seeing "The Desert Crucible" advertised on your attractive cover, I bought the magazine, and have never missed a copy since.

To my notion, the people who are registering so many kicks against your serial stories don't realize what it would mean to have them discontinued. As for me, would rather have a story in serial form than not have it at all. Me for serials every time.

In reply to your request in the March number, asking to hear from readers in regard to whether the author is worthy of any notice (or something to that effect) I beg to state that the author's name is second in line to come to my notice. Ever since I began reading THE ARGOSY, I have been an interested reader of the Log-Book. I am not a regular subscriber, but buy my ARGOSY of the local dealers every month.

Hoping to hear from some others in regard to "serial" and "author" business, I am

An ARGOSY Booster,

E. W. HARWOOD.

## A CONFESSION BY THE EDITOR

Here's another man who wants more opinions on serials. We, as editor and publishers, have found serials more profitable than no serials, so it isn't a question of whether to drop them or not. For my part, the presence in the new number of a fresh part of a story in which I am already interested adds a real zest to magazine purchasing. And I never think of waiting until I have the whole story complete. Now, I've expressed my own views quite frankly, so it's your turn, readers of THE ARGOSY. Meanwhile listen to our friend from Albany, Georgia, which reminds me that I have just accepted a novel about Albany, New York.

Albany, Georgia.

I started to read THE ARGOSY October, 1914, and my first issue had "The Man With the 44 Chest" in it, and after reading that I sure had to have it every month. That story suited me the best of any, but "One-Cylinder Sam" and several others came powerful near to it.

It would be interesting to me to find out through the Log-Book why people like serials. I can't understand it, although they aren't any great annoyance to me, as I wait until the last instalment is in, then read it altogether. It seems peculiar that people should want their stories in parts. Of course, I don't think your magazine is the best every month, but taking an average of the stories, I don't think it could be beaten by many, if any, others.

FRANK S. LEGGETT.

## "THE BOOK OF BOOKS" TO HIM

It's a real pleasure to an editor to receive such a letter as the subjoined from one who has

reached the age of Mr. Rivers. It only goes to emphasize afresh the universal appeal of THE ARGOSY.

Turkey, Texas.

I am writing this, not as a kicker, but as a booster of our magazine, the book of books. I have just finished the February number, and will say that it comes up to the full standard, in my estimation. "Why There Was a Murder on Pearl Street" just cannot be beaten, and all the whole book is good, and worth any person's perusal. I am now seventy-five years old; am an old Confederate veteran, and have written the history of my life, and must say that THE ARGOSY has been one of the incentives to me, and helped me greatly in writing.

J. H. RIVERS.

## GOES BY THE AUTHOR

A neat way of expressing a reader's interest in the man or woman who writes a story is furnished in the letter below from one who, of course, is now ranged on the side of those who pay particular attention to authors' names. At present I have made no arrangements with the Williamsons about a story for THE ARGOSY. I think, however, our Providence friend will be especially interested in "A Wall Street Cavalier," to appear before long.

Providence, Rhode Island.

The first thing I do when I make a call on an author's imagination is to look on the name-plate on the title-page. When Mr. Magazine presents Mr. Author to me, I know it is the correct thing to know and remember the man's name. Then I say to myself: "I'm glad I have this opportunity to know this man. I wonder whether I'll want him for a close friend or just a casual acquaintance, or whether I'll be sorry I ever met him." And I set myself immediately to find out by studying his style, personality, imagination, descriptive faculty, and knowledge of life and characterization. When my study brings satisfactory conclusions, I am always on the lookout to renew and deepen our friendship. The Williamsons? Yes, delightful people. I met them in the ALL-STORY a few weeks ago. Will they be in your book? I'll be very happy to meet them again.

The above not only places my position on author's names before you, but hints at something I'd like to see—something by the Williamsons, and preferably a travel story at which they excel. And you may pass on the information to An Old Chap (May Log) that I am greatly vexed with him.

FRANCES R. SHAW.

## HOW DID YOU COME BY YOUR FIRST ARGOSY?

If all readers of periodicals were as reasonable as Mr. Lockhart, the editor's path would indeed be strewn with roses. I am glad to have his opinion on the March novel, even though it is rather belated. I have in stock another corking long tale by Mr. Cain, "The Gilded Trap." I am wondering what you all think of the Bronx yarn in the present issue. The author, the artist, and the editor all made a special motor trip to Bronx Park in order to get the scene for the cover picture.

Rogers, Texas.

I have just finished reading George M. A. Cain's "Four Speeds for Forest Hill," and I think it is just fine. I will not say that I like everything in THE ARGOSY as well as I do that one, but I do say that I read THE ARGOSY in preference to any other magazine. The editor of a big paper like THE ARGOSY could not put in stories that would suit every one, so I am content to get one once in a while that is as good as the above mentioned.

I do not remember where I found my first copy of THE ARGOSY, but I have not missed one in some while now. I have been reading all my life, or nearly ever since I can remember, and I have read many books, but I always look forward to the coming of THE ARGOSY as being a rare treat indeed. I am glad that I do not have to knock THE ARGOSY, for I find that it is worth every cent, and more, of the dime I pay for it.

Let the editor give us what he thinks best, and I surely will not kick. He is doing his best to please us all, and he has certainly pleased me up to now, and will in the future, so long as he keeps up his present gait.

T. I. LOCKHART.

## A BOOSTER WORTH HAVING

There has just come to hand another opinion on the March novel. Better late than never. Our Tennessee friend is a partizan worth having, the sort of chap one would like to have go on the stump for one if one were running for office. Listen to him:

Fayetteville, Tennessee.

I have just finished reading "Four Speeds for Forest Hill." Let me tell you one thing: Mr. Fred Jackson has not got anything on Mr. George M. A. Cain, and "31754," by Lawrence Perry, cannot be beat. Oh, well, they are all good; but if any one finds fault with the two I have just mentioned, why, they should see a doctor at once. Give us some more like them.

J. R. HAMPTON.

## THE ONE THING THAT CAUSED HIM TO QUIT

Here's an appreciative reader, indeed, one who sticks to THE ARGOSY in spite of trouble with his eyesight. Fortunately for him we do not print on shiny paper. My best wishes to you, Mr. White, for an improvement in your vision, and many thanks for your complimentary words.

Warren Point, New Jersey.

I had been an ardent reader of THE ARGOSY for several years when, owing to defective eyesight, I was compelled to give up reading entirely, and had not seen a copy of ARGOSY for more than eighteen months until I purchased the April, 1916, issue, and even though my eyes are aching from too close application to the final chapters of "Heir to Three Millions" (May number), I must say that I never found so much wonderfully good reading between two paper

covers before; and I am just wondering whether I dare begin "From Dusk to Dark." My best wishes to THE ARGOSY, its authors and readers.

L. H. WHITE.

## NO APOLOGIES NECESSARY

No reader needs to beg my pardon for taking my time when he sends such a succinct statement of the stories and authors he likes as does Mr. Hogan. It makes what I call straightaway stuff.

Fincastle, Virginia.

THE ARGOSY certainly is some magazine. Your best authors are H. Bedford-Jones, E. J. Rath, James Francis Dwyer, William Wallace Cook, William McLeod Raine, Lawrence Perry, and Fred Jackson. "Comrade Island," "One-Cylinder Sam," "Men in the Raw," "The Diamond Necklace," "Too Terrible for War," and "The Desert Crucible" were all fine yarns. "The Brides of Sana" and "Castles in the Air" both promise fine stories. Beg pardon for taking your time.

GEORGE W. HOGAN.

## WHY THE ARGOSY NEVER BUYS NAMES

This man believes the story's the thing, no matter who writes it. Also that an author may write a good story to-day and a poor one to-morrow, in which I quite agree with him. Hence I don't believe in "buying" names, as they say in the publishing world. Thus our readers may rest assured of getting good stories all the while.

Pulaski, Tennessee.

Please keep up the good work you are carrying on. Your Log-Book is one of your best features. It is very amusing to note the tastes of your readers. Some don't like one kind of story, while another fancies such a story that the former dislikes. Tell your kickers kindly to note that the editor is striving to give the reading fans the best stories obtainable, and where you kick on one story, you are knocking the kind of story the majority of readers like. Now, as to the author of any particular story—the first story of his, you may not like, but when you see his name on another story, don't judge this story by the former; it might come up to your standards. Some people are like the man I noticed reading a book the other day. I heard him say, "James More! Why I read some of his work last week. It was rotten." Anyhow, he read his story, and when I asked him how he liked it, he answered: "I take it back. That kid put out a good story there."

So you see, what you don't like, somebody else does; and also, don't judge a story by the author's name. You may not like the first, but the last may be a bird. Here is hoping THE ARGOSY keeps up the good work and may last forever. About the change in price:

Prices may come and prices may go,
But I buy on forever.

W. E. BURTON.

## ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE GIRL

The April novel made a great big hit with our readers, but the latter appear to have it in for the artists who illustrated the story. I have already disposed of a criticism on the cover, and here's a chap taking a fall out of the heading. Let me remind Mr. Wagstaff that the artist did not necessarily take the point where the thugs attacked the heroine. It is reasonable to suppose she at once turned to face them, when the fiercer struggle ensued, as shown in the picture.

Sarnia, Ontario.

I notice in your issue of ARGOSY for April you have a story entitled "A Mystery of Roscoe Conkling Park." The story in itself is all right, but, just by way of a mild criticism, I would like to point out that the picture over the opening chapter does not agree. The men are supposed to have come upon the heroine from behind.

GEORGE T. WAGSTAFF.

## SUITS HIM DOWN TO THE GROUND

When one considers that the book-length novel does not occupy quite half the magazine, one realizes what a high compliment is paid THE ARGOSY in the comment of Mr. Hynes, who voices it on the occasion of sending in his year's subscription.

Chicago, Illinois.

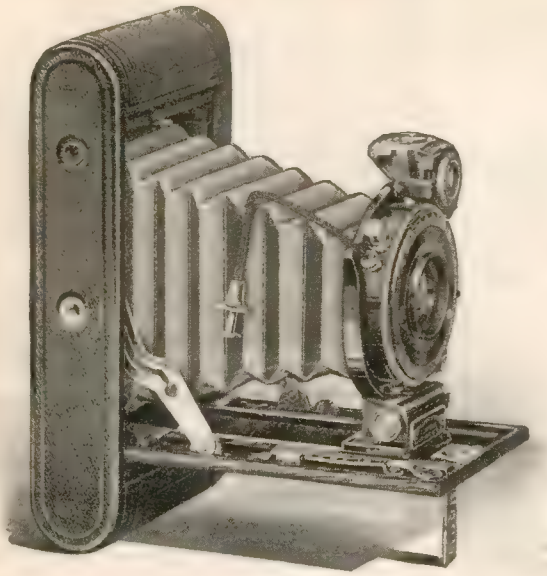
I wish to say that THE ARGOSY suits me right down to the ground, and I would consider that I had received full value for my money if the book-length novel were the only story that interested me in each issue.

W. J. HYNES.

## LOG-BOOK JOTTINGS

E. Yell, now of McIntosh, New Mexico, used to ride 35 miles from his ranch in Encino, New Mexico, to buy his ARGOSY. He calls *all* the authors O. K. And here's O. P. Gilmore, Big Creek, Nebraska, announcing that until he subscribed he was going 25 miles for his ARGOSY and by horse. Emery C. Caton, Minneapolis, says he's a confirmed bookworm, and that he reads THE ARGOSY the first of his many monthly subscriptions. Calls it the best ever, with no exceptions.

F. Joseph Richartz, Camden, New Jersey, considers the price for THE ARGOSY well spent, and takes delight in reading the Log-Book, to which he always turns first. Ralph P. Miller, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, tried to forget THE ARGOSY, but couldn't hold out. Regards it as a tonic after a hard day's work. Harry M. Rouzer, of the National Military Home in Ohio, in sending his subscription, adds: "Many magazines are bad, many poor, some are fair, and others good; but there is only one in the 'excellent and can't-be-beat' class—THE ARGOSY." Theodore Jacobs, Granby, Colorado, found "Comrade Island" and "Between Nine and Two" both good. He chanced to pick up an ARGOSY four years ago; found that it sure hit the spot, and hasn't missed a copy since. J. V. C., Monticello, New York, claims that there are plenty of readers who are fond of serial stories, and "if any one looks sharp enough he will find my name at the head of the list."



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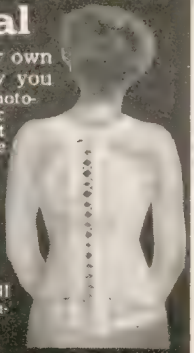

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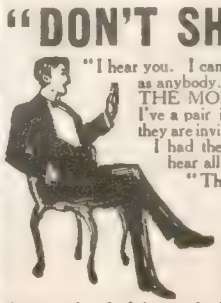

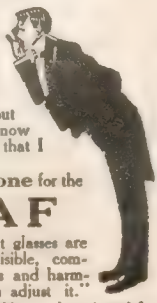

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**20-Inch Latest Model Wire Racing Wheels**

**3 SPEEDS**
**Low, Medium and High**

THE CULVER RACER is a "real-for-sure" Automobile and is the only car that is especially built and designed for boys and girls, so simple in operation that any boy or girl can learn to drive it in a few minutes. It is up-to-date in design and of the highest quality of workmanship. Its ball-bearing wire wheels are the very latest in motor car construction, having Culver non-skid 20 x 2 clincher tires with inner tubes. The axles are made of crucible steel; has a regular foot-pedal clutch; a capacity of two gallons of gasoline, which is enough to go 120 miles without refilling. The Culver Racer has a 36-inch tread; a wheel base of 63 inches; springs, latest cantilever type; shaft drive transmission.

This dandy racer has three speeds forward, low, medium, and high; two speeds reverse. The 5 horse-power engine is especially designed; brakes are very substantial, external contracting 5-inch Raybestos; battery or set spark ignition with a high grade magneto. The size of the car is 3 feet wide and 6 feet long. Its weight is 250 pounds, ready for the road, and is capable of making a speed up to 25 miles per hour. The tool box, fully equipped, is built into the rear of the car. The upholstering is of leather design, seat and back. The finish is a pretty, brilliant racing blue, with black trimmings.

# Will Not Cost You One Cent

Just think how all the boys and girls will envy you when they see you riding down the street at a merry gait in the dandy Culver Racer I gave you. Won't they all open their eyes with wonder and astonishment when you tell them how easy you won it? If you could see this splendid little Automobile—if you could crank it up and hear the steady whir of the speedy, powerful motor—if you could go riding down the street alongside the big cars that cost their owners a lot of money, I am sure you would not delay one minute in signing and mailing the coupon below.

The Culver Racer is going to be given away without cost, all carrying charges prepaid, to the person who has the most votes to his credit at the end of the contest which is just now beginning. Think, too, I am going to give you 2000 FREE VOTES just for mailing the coupon to me. IT WILL NOT COST YOU ONE CENT, now or ever. All I ask for it is just a little of your spare time pleasantly spent among your friends, neighbors and relatives.

This is your chance to own a regular Automobile—not only that, but I will give you dozens of other beautiful and useful prizes that all boys and girls want—just the kind of presents you have often wished for. My plan is so easy and simple that you are sure to win if you will mail the coupon at once and get started right away. You will be surprised at how very easily you will get the very things your heart desires. There are no strings or limitations to my liberal plan—everything is to be given away exactly as I say, and all you will be asked to do is to follow the easy directions I will give you from time to time.

*Write your name and address on the coupon below and mail it to me right away. Then, after you have heard from me, you will agree with me when I say my plan for giving away Automobiles and other grand prizes is so easy that you can't keep from winning. Hurry the coupon to me and you will be surprised at how quickly and easily you will be the proud and happy owner of this dandy Racer.*

# Hurry—Write Me Quick

I am mighty proud of my boy and girl friends all over the country and I am always anxious to do them favors when I can, because they do me favors, and this is only one of my many ways of showing my appreciation.

Don't let anyone tell you that you can't win this dandy Culver Racer. You can win if you will try, and there's no reason in the world why you shouldn't win if you will act promptly and mail me the coupon at once. Don't let this opportunity slip by—don't lay down this magazine until you have clipped out and mailed the coupon. By doing this I will give you 2000 FREE VOTES toward winning the Culver Racer. That will be a fine start—a splendid beginning. As soon as I hear from you, I will answer your letter at once and tell you how to get several thousand more votes for a very little effort. MAIL THE COUPON TODAY—QUICKLY.

**T. JARVIS, *The Auto Man***
**Department A** **SPRINGFIELD, OHIO**

Good for 2000 Free Votes

**T. JARVIS**
***The Auto Man***
**Dept. A**
**Springfield, Ohio**

Dear Sir: Please credit me with 2000 votes toward winning the dandy Culver Racer as described, and tell me how I can earn more votes and the fine prizes you are giving away.

Name.....

Street or R.F.D.....

Post Office.....State.....

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